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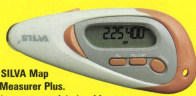
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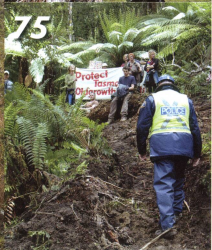
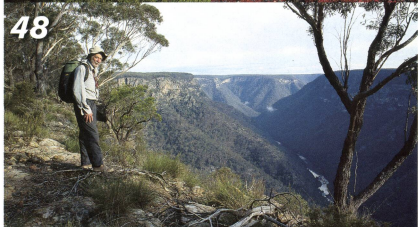
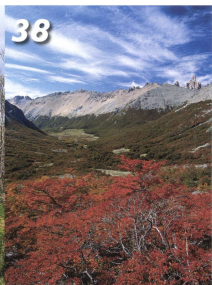
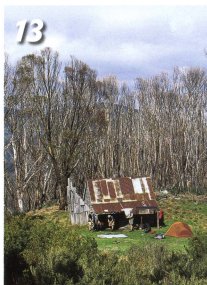
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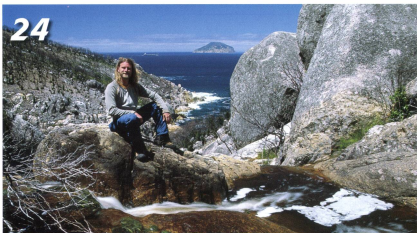
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Wild
AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS LIVING MAGAZINE

Established 1981

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WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



Cover Ken and Wendy Palmer admire Marriots Falls, Mt Field National Park, Tasmania.

Nick Hancock

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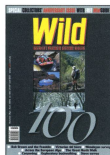
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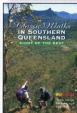
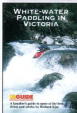
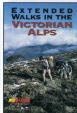
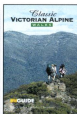
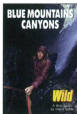
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Online upgrade

IT COVERS AUSTRALIA'S BEST COUNTRY, IS EASY on the eye, requires only simple navigation and information is plentiful—the newly updated *Wild* web site sounds like a great trip! After a lot of work, the first stage of www.wild.com.au is now complete. We've concentrated on function over flash and are very happy with the result.

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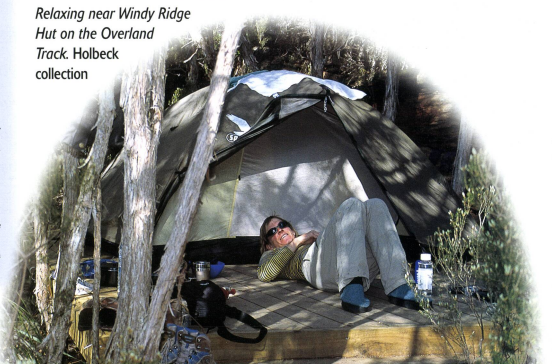
Megan Holbeck
editorial@wild.com.au

Staff departures and arrivals

Administrative and Editorial Coordinator Tim Langford left *Wild* Publications just before Christmas, choosing to swan around Chile for a couple of months before beginning a full-time editing course in March. We wish him the best of luck.

Replacing him is Ross Taylor, a keen climber who has been dragging himself out bush since his parents stopped doing it. He's the self-described 'bright new shining light of *Wild* Publications'—we look forward to watching him live up to that reputation.

*Relaxing near Windy Ridge
 Hut on the Overland
 Track.* Holbeck
 collection





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PARKS, PESTS AND POLICIES

A national park of one's own?

DESPITE BEING ABLE TO REOPEN ALMOST ALL popular tourist destinations remarkably quickly, by contrast Parks Victoria (PV) has moved at a glacial pace towards reopening extensive popular bushwalking and climbing areas in the central Grampians National Park that have remained closed to the public ever since the January 2006 bushfires. One of the most important of these is the Wonderland Range. But while most of us remain shut out, since last September commercial operators have been able to take walkers willing to pay them for the privilege into this range! In attempting to justify this policy PV confirms where its priorities lie by stating that: 'This initiative is contributing to the recovery of local businesses as well as protecting the regenerating vegetation...'

The only rockclimbing area that has been reopened, the Watchtower, is the most important to commercial operators. Their pressure on PV was also instrumental in that reopening, but at least the rest of us can go there too, unlike the Wonderland Range, where PV has created a most dubious precedent in public land management.

Chris Baxter
Glen Iris, Vic

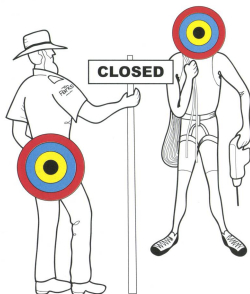
I have been reading a few back issues of *Wild* and am sorely disappointed at some of the comments criticising the legitimate conservation efforts of fellow lovers of the outdoors. The efforts of hunters for conservation and the protection of vulnerable species by the selective removal of species that need to be controlled is well recognised worldwide. Public land managers Australia-wide would be doing this work themselves, apart from the lack of available funding, a problem we all understand.

These undesirable species are doing their damage right now; they are not waiting for biological controls to be developed. As long as they are being removed this is good. Your support for increased training for the participants and raising public awareness about this important volunteer work is needed, not your criticism.

Put aside your views about firearms and killing and instead think about conserving and managing what we've got left before it has all been eaten by these pests...your support and encouragement will go further for your cause and for our threatened wildlife and ecosystems than your criticism...

Rick Butler
Wodonga, Vic

On a recent historical bushwalk to Mt York (the Blue Mountains, New South Wales), I was dismayed to see the amount of erosion on the escarpment caused by irresponsible climbers. It has been some eight years since



Pick your
management
strategy...

Michael
Houghton

my last visit to the area and I was shocked by the difference. I was told that a tree with its roots embedded in the Cox's Road historical site had fallen over in a wind storm recently, taking with it a large section of convict road. I wonder whether the tree would have fallen if it had adequate soil to be established in, rather than the bare rock caused by thousands of feet trampling on the fragile cliff-top ecosystem? As if this wasn't bad enough, apparently someone has glued two bolts into the cliff to replace the tree as an anchor system for irresponsible, adrenalin-craving climbers. Why is it that it is not enough to destroy the natural environment, but people must go one step further and permanently deface part of Australia's natural wonders? Since when has the recreation of a few people been more important than the preservation of significant natural and historical sites for future generations?

Arthur Mackay
Turrumurra, NSW

Resolving the issues

Wild no 103 is the best issue of the magazine I've read. I learned some extra useful navigation info (using a watch to estimate north), particularly enjoyed the Wonnangatta revisited article and was completely surprised by the existence of the Cape Liptrap walk despite a base I have in Leongatha.

Regarding the gear survey, I thought you should have included or noted the ACG brand (Nike) jackets. I use ACG Gore-Tex and non-Gore-Tex jackets and overpants and they're the best I've used.

Rudi Michelson
Toorak, Vic

In *Wild* nos 102 and 103 there has been some discussion in the Wildfire section of the

magazine regarding carrying fuel stoves on aircraft. It may be helpful to direct readers' attention to the following web site: <http://www.casa.gov.au/dg/luggage/dgtable.htm> This is the official CASA page on dangerous goods and provides specific instructions in relation to 'Methods to nullify the hazard with camping stoves and fuel tanks'. It may be wise for readers to print a copy of this page and carry it with them in case they need to argue with airline staff.

Kelvin Proctor
Meadowbank, NSW

A Wild stalwart in the making...

My name is Liam. I am six. I live in Tasmania. In October I did the whole Overland Track...On the first day we walked to Waterfall Valley...I ate all the chocolate out of the scroggin. There was lots and lots of snow. I was throwing it at Mummy and Ma and Uncle Scotty. We got to the hut in the dark. We used torches. When we woke up in the morning it was raining and blowing a gale and snowing. The wind was very strong on the way to Windermere Hut. I think that is why it has 'wind' in its name.

We went on to Pelion Hut. We had a bath in the swimming hole near the old hut. It was cold. The longest walk was from Pelion to Windy Ridge. We felt tired. I liked staying in the huts.

The Overland Track is not just for big people, it is for kids too. I got a certificate signed by the ranger. I liked the nice trees and flowers.

Liam Smith
Exeter, Tas

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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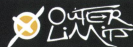
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Burning hot: the bushfires of October 2006–January 2007

Victoria's High Country ablaze, again; by Glenn van der Knijff

Almost four years after bushfires ripped through 1.3 million hectares of the Australian Alps, lightning again triggered fires in Victoria's north-east in early December 2006. Several spot fires joined into a number of massive fronts that burnt property and bushland in the Bruthen, Dargo, Jamieson, Licola, Mt Buller, Tatong and Whitfield areas. Not only was prime walking country consumed by the fires, particularly in the region from Mt Speculation south to Lake Tali Karg, but also numerous houses, livestock and mountain huts. Craigs Hut (near Mt Stirling and used as a setting in *The Man From Snowy River* films) and Westons Hut (on the Bogong High Plains) have both been burnt beyond repair, as were Bluff Hut and Ritchies Hut, both in the Howqua Hills region of the Alps. There were unconfirmed reports of other huts being ruined (including Bindaree and Upper Jamieson huts).

As the flames spread to the south, east and north, the fires also threatened the catchment of the Thompson Dam near Mt Baw Baw, the major water supply for Melbourne. To make matters worse, a fire in the Coopers Creek area of Gippsland, thought to have been deliberately lit many days after the main fires began, burned to within metres of the historic mining village of Walhalla and destroyed some of the infrastructure of the Walhalla Tourist Railway. Further north, fire encroached upon Mt Buffalo National Park and destroyed the Tatra Inn building complex at Cresta Valley, a popular skiing area for families and beginner skiers. Yet another fire, this time near Tawonga Gap between the townships of Bright and Mt Beauty, spread east and south into the mountains near Falls Creek, Mt Feathertop and Mt Cope, including some areas that were badly burnt in the summer of 2003. By mid-January 2007, when more than one million hectares had been razed and a new fire had been reported near Tom Groggin, close to the New South Wales border, the fires in the High Country had not been doused and still posed a significant threat.

Roger Lembit gives a summary of the fires in the Blue Mountains

Thunderstorms in November 2006 began a series of bushfires across the Blue Mountains. One fire burnt more than 9000 hectares of land in the remote Blue Breaks area, east of Kanangra Walls, blazing across the Tonalli Tableland and

reaching the shores of Lake Burratorang, Sydney's main water supply.

Several fires in Wollemi National Park were started by lightning strikes on 13 November 2006. Subsequent fires beginning near the Putty Road were believed to have been the result of arson. The Wollemi fires spread over a combined area in excess of 90 000 hectares covering the Mt Coricudgy, Numietta, Cooran-gooba, Ovens Creek, Dunns Swamp and Stoney Waterholes areas. (Dunns Swamp—also known as Kandos Weir—is a popular spot for camping and kayaking, east of Rylstone.)

Another fire was ignited by lightning strikes north of Mt Victoria and burnt through 14 000 hectares in the Grose Valley. The NSW Rural Fire Service lit extensive backburns to fight the fire, which breached containment lines and burnt through the iconic Blue Gum Forest, severely damaging a number of mature blue gums.



Walkers in Wollemi National Park, north of Gaspers Mountain, after recent bushfires. David Noble. Below, Westons Hut, dating from the 1930s, was one of the few mountain shelters remaining in close to its original form. It survived the 2003 fires but by January 2007 its time was up. Glenn van der Knijff





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The extent of the backburning has angered many people, who feel the forest could have escaped damage if the fire had been fought using more subtle, remote-area fire-fighting techniques. Environment groups have called for an independent inquiry into the bushfire focusing on its impact on the Blue Gum Forest and World Heritage values, and whether these values were unnecessarily damaged by the extensive backburn and subsequent escape of the fire.

Grant Dixon details the damage in Tasmania

Bushfires ravaged parts of Tasmania during spring and early summer, mostly in the very dry east and north-east of the state. Walking tracks were closed in both Freycinet and Douglas-Apsley National Parks for short periods during October and December due to extreme fire danger, although neither park was ultimately burnt. Before Christmas the Douglas-Apsley National Park was directly threatened by a large bushfire around St Marys but the blaze was contained several kilometres to the north. At the time of writing, significant walking areas in Tasmania had not been affected by the fires.

The most extensive and damaging bushfires in Tasmania were around St Marys in the north-east, and at Kelleve, 45 kilometres east of Hobart. These fires apparently started in State Forest and on private land, respectively, but reserved lands were also burnt. The St Marys fire burnt 29 000 hectares, destroyed some 20 houses around Scamander and completely incinerated St Patricks Head State Reserve and much of Little Beach State Reserve. The Kelleve fire (and associated backburning) burnt 15 000 hectares including most of the Wielangta Forest and adjacent Cape Bernier Nature Reserve.

Authorities suspect that the St Marys fire was arson. In mid-January several small fires, again suspected of being deliberately lit and with the potential to threaten Douglas-Apsley National Park, were quickly brought under control.

Cool and damp weather through the Christmas period and early January assisted in controlling most blazes, but the fire danger remained high, especially in the east and north-east.

Walk Against Warming

Foot power demonstrations demand climate change action, by *Tricia Phelan*



The crowd gathered outside the Melbourne Town Hall for the Walk Against Warming in November. David Blumenthal

On 4 November 2006 more than 100 000 people attended 27 Walk Against Warming events across Australia to demand action on climate change. Events took place in every Australian capital city, with the walks in Melbourne and Sydney attracting 40 000 people each, as well as in many regional centres including Ballarat, Townsville and Wollongong. Every event supported key targets for renewable energy and deep cuts in greenhouse pollution.

The event, an initiative of the Conservation Councils of Australia, was supported by a whole host of community, faith, en-

vironment, aid, development, student and transport groups, as well as by unions and councils. People of all ages and backgrounds took part, with many marching for the first time.

Environment Victoria and Greenpeace jointly organised the Melbourne event, during which a sea of people swallowed up the front of the Melbourne Town Hall on Swanston Street before marching to Birrarung Marr for speakers, stalls and entertainment. Walk Against Warming will be back in 2007 in the lead up to the federal election. For more information visit www.walkagainstawarming.org.au

Wilderness areas in Kosciuszko National Park

John Chapman gives us an update after his trip along the Australian Alps Walking Track

The Jagungal and Pilot Wilderness Areas seem to be managed in a contradictory manner at present. While signs for bushwalkers are not allowed under the wilderness designation, all the management tracks are clearly signposted.

Bulldozers have recently widened the Grey Mare and Cascade Tracks into massive firebreaks. In an area where many trees were burnt in the 2003 fires, instead of pushing over dead trees to create the firebreak, the

bulldozer operator pushed over many of the few remaining live snow gums. This has ruined the wilderness feel of these previously grassy tracks and will undoubtedly encourage many walkers to leave the fire tracks and walk elsewhere in the park.

The NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service tells us that this is a wilderness area yet they drive all over it, run dozers along the tracks, erect signs for themselves so they won't get lost (including a new track north of Grey

Mare Track!) and leave users to pretend it is 'wilderness' when it clearly isn't.

In other news from the AAWT, water tanks have been installed at Johnnies Top, east of the Mitta Mitta River, and two kilometres west of East Riley Road in the Barry Mountains. A hut with an unreliable water tank has been built on the summit of Mt Wills, to the east of Mt Bogong. The AAWT is effectively now closed for this summer as the fire-affected section is off limits.

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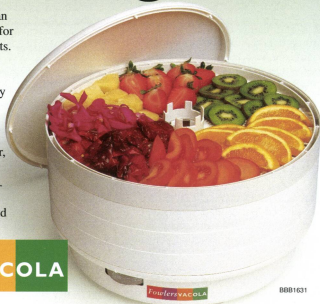
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Mountain running round-up

Race organiser Reg Splatt on the 2006 Bright Alpine Four Peaks Race

The event takes place during Melbourne Cup weekend every year, with runs up Mystic Hill, Mt Feathertop, Mt Hotham and Mt Buffalo. In 2006 it went from 4-7 November, and for the 28th year had record entries.

The weather was the best for ten years and the magic 360° views on Mt Feathertop were not blighted by the usual -5°C wind. King of the Mountains was Jarad Kohlar of Cranbourne on his third try, in four hours, 55 minutes and 35 seconds. The Queen was world orienteering champion Hanny Allston from Tasmania in five hours and 47 minutes, rewriting the records on Mt Hotham and Mt Buffalo in the process.

Allston's start wasn't without some drama. Her mum rang in mid-October to ask whether Hanny could start late, around 11.30 am. The last runners leave at 8.30 am and by 11.30 we're all packed up and gone. I didn't know Allston, but being one always to try to please the lovely ladies, I agreed. So start day (Saturday) comes: all the runners aren't lost (for a change), we've fed 200 bodies for \$2.50 each a day and most people have packed up and gone home to prepare for day two. Allston arrives by 11.30 am and her schedule is somewhat mind-boggling: attend a presentation in Hobart on Friday night and get to bed late, catch a plane at 6 am, land at Tullamarine Airport at 7.10 am, hire a car and 300 kilometres later arrive at the race's start.

After smashing records on both Mt Hotham and Mt Buffalo and winning the title, Allston returned home. She later ran the Mt Wellington race (a 22 kilometre run with a 1270 metre climb) in one hour and 43 minutes, then went on to run a marathon on gravel roads in two hours and 43 minutes. What a girl; a real humble champ.

Talking of champions, a line on Paul Crake who has won five Empire State Building Run Ups and holds the record. Crake is a four-time winner of the Four Peaks Race and holds every record. He has been paralysed and wheel-chair-bound after a horrific bike accident in New Zealand. Crake is a quiet, humble champ and I'm sure that as all who read this or know him will wish—as I do—for his full recovery.

If you want more about the Four Peaks, go to <http://brightalpineclimb.netc.net.au>

John Harding gives a summary of mountain running events in the Australian Capital Territory

On 22 October 2006 the ACT Cross Country Club's (CCC) Brindabella Classic, founded by long-standing CCC member ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope in 1987, returned to its traditional course in the Brindabella Ranges for the first time since the 2003 bushfires. The

54 kilometre course begins at the weather station on the summit of Mt Ginini and takes in Mt Franklin, Aggies Gap and Bulls Head, before eventually ending at the Cotter reserve, with a net fall of 1300 metres over the total distance.

on 18 November with a runaway win in the Two Peaks Classic over Mt Ainslie and Mt Majura, completing the 26 kilometres in one hour, 42 minutes and 36 seconds. In second place was veteran runner Trevor Jacobs, who placed 21st overall and first over-50 male in



Stuart Doyle, winner of December's Tour de Mountain, on his way to winning the May 2006 Black Mountain Run-up in record time. Tim Sawkins

Olympic archery gold medallist Simon Fairweather has become an accomplished long-distance track runner in recent years, leading the field for much of the race. He seemed set for his first victory since the 2005 Ororral Valley Classic before Martin Fryer, holder of the Coast to Kosciuszko record, powered home in the final ten kilometres to win the race in three hours, 59 minutes and 30 seconds. Fairweather came second in four hours, four minutes and 45 seconds, with NSW runner Chris Graham third in four hours, five minutes and 44 seconds. Fastest female was Robin Cameron in five hours, two minutes and 41 seconds, three minutes ahead of Kerrie Bremner.

Australian mountain running representative Stuart Doyle celebrated his 40th birthday

September's world long-distance mountain-running championship in the USA, with former Australian orienteering champion Andy Hogg in third place. Fastest female was orienteering international Jo Allison in two hours, 17 minutes and 53 seconds.

Doyle also took out the 19 kilometre Tour de Mountain on 17 December, clocking a race record of one hour, 13 minutes and 36 seconds. The course is a scenic tour of the ridges and peaks of Canberra's Woden Valley. A 6.30 am start ensured cool conditions, with Canberra's world long-distance mountain-running champion Emma Murray taking advantage of a 10°C overnight minimum to finish sixth overall and lower the women's race record to one hour, 24 minutes and 11 seconds.

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A marathon effort

After 14 years, a new record for the Murray Marathon, by *Melissa Sawyer*

A cool, light southerly wind caused the red gums on the banks of the Murray River to sway and nothing could be heard...except the buzz of more than 700 nervous and excited paddlers ready to hit the water. It was the first day of the 404 kilometre Red Cross Murray Marathon, and while most of us were putting our feet up over the Christmas break, these paddlers were getting ready to take on one of the longest paddling events in the world.

The event began in Yarrowonga on 27 December and ended five days later at Swan Hill on New Year's Eve, traversing rugged country and a 70 000 hectare red-gum forest along the river border shared by NSW and Victoria. It attracts a dedicated core of enthusiastic paddlers as well as 'weekend warriors' from throughout Australia and the world.

None were more dedicated than a team of two Red Cross Murray Marathon champions, Nev Hargreaves and Simon Stenhouse, and two Australian kayaking team members, Michael Leverett and Tim Naughtin. They joined together to break a 14-year-old record to be the first people to complete the race in less than 25 hours. The four-man 'super boat' achieved their goal of completing the race in the fastest time, winning the overall handicap and taking line honours each day. They paddled into Swan Hill in 24 hours, 18 minutes and 47 seconds.



Michael Leverett, Nev Hargreaves, Simon Stenhouse and Tim Naughtin out in front on the third day of the Murray Marathon. Liam Lynch

'What we're seeing here is probably the fastest K4 long-distance team that Australia could ever produce', said Glenn Hemphill, who set the previous record in 1992 with Hargreaves.

The Murray Marathon is an annual event where first timers can paddle alongside elite athletes, all raising money for the Red Cross. Go to www.redcross.org.au for more information.

Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Email editorial@wild.com.au

March

Metrogaine 6 hr R
17 March, SA
www.sa.rogaine.asn.au

2 x 6 hr R
17-18 March, Vic
www.vra.rogaine.asn.au

Trailwalker Melbourne B R
23-25 March, Vic
www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/melbourne

Australian Alpine 100 Mile Ultra Marathon BR
24-26 March, Vic
www.coolrunning.com.au

SSCC State Marathon Championships C
24-25 March, NSW
www.canoe.org.au

Rock 'n' Roll C
24-26 March, NSW
www.nswseakayaker.asn.au

AROC 12 hr Urban Adventure M
31 March, ACT
www.arocsport.com.au

April

3/8 hr R
1 April, Qld
www.qldrogaine.asn.au

Three Peaks Race M
6-7 April, Tas
www.threepooks.org.au

National Marathon Championships C

6-8 April, Vic
www.canoe.org.au

Australian Climbing Festival RC
6-8 April, NSW
www.climbingfestival.com.au

Wilson's Promontory 100 km Ultra Marathon BR
28 April, Vic
www.coolrunning.com.au

Autumn 12 hr R
28 April, WA
www.rogaine.asn.au

Autumn 24 hr R
28-29 April, NSW
www.nswrogaining.org

15/24 hr R
28-29 April, Vic
www.vra.rogaine.asn.au

May

Multipoint Rogaine M R
5-6 May, Qld
www.qldrogaine.asn.au

12/24 hr R
5-6 May, SA
www.sa.rogaine.asn.au

Veterans Challenge 12 hr R
26 May, Vic
www.vra.rogaine.asn.au

State Championships 8/24 hr R
26-27 May, ACT
www.act.rogaine.asn.au

June

State Championships 6/15/24 hr R
2 June, Qld
www.qldrogaine.asn.au

6 hr R
16 June, SA
www.sa.rogaine.asn.au

Schools Challenge 2 x 12 hr R
16-17 June, Vic
www.vra.rogaine.asn.au

Paddy Pallin 6 hr R
17 June, NSW
www.nswrogaining.org

State Championships Winter 24 hr R
30 June-1 July, WA
www.wa.rogaine.asn.au

July

Australian Championships R
28-29 July, NT
<http://www.gar.com.au>

August

XPB 3rd Edition M
20-31 August, Qld
www.gar.com.au

State Championships 24 hr R
25-26 August, SA
www.sa.rogaine.asn.au

Spring 24 hr and Schools Championships R
25-26 August, WA
www.wa.rogaine.asn.au

September

GCC State Marathon Championships C
15-16 September, Vic
www.canoe.org.au

State Marathon Championships C
22-23 September, Qld
www.canoe.org.au

October

State Championships 24 hr R
20-21 October, NSW
www.nswrogaining.org

State Championship 24 hr R
27-28 October, Vic
<http://vra.rogaine.asn.au>

November

State Championships 8/24 hr R
24-25 November, Tas
www.rta.asn.au

Activities: B bushwalking, BR bush running, C canoeing, M multipoints, R rogaining, RC rockclimbing. **Organisations:** GCC Geelong Canoe Club, SSCC Sutherland Shire Canoe Club. **Rogaining events** are organised by the State rogaining associations. Canoeing events are organised by the state canoeing associations unless otherwise stated.

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SCROGGING

A long way from Formula One...

The Mark Webber Pure Tasmania Challenge was held in Tasmania from 5–10 November 2006. Twelve teams of four people took part in the six-day, 600 kilometre event that took in a whole lot of Tassie's best including walking, cycling, and paddling legs through Launceston's Cataract Gorge, the Great Western Tiers, the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, the Mersey River, Cradle Mountain and Bruny Island. The race ended in Hobart with Webber's team, the experienced adventure

racers Guy Andrews and Matt Dalziel, and UK rowing champion James Cracknell, first home. They narrowly beat a team that included Craig Mottram, mountain-bike champion Sid Taberlay and Oarsome Foursome member Mike McKay.

The challenge is Formula One driver Mark Webber's way of raising money for children with cancer. For more information, go to www.markwebberchallenge.com

Mountain bike champion Sid Taberlay (front) leads Olympic gold medallist Matt Wells and rower Mike McKay through the Walls of Jerusalem National Park during the Mark Webber Challenge. Jerry Galea



Blue Mountains tragedies

As widely reported in the news, 17-year-old bushwalker David Iredale's body was found two kilometres east of Mt Solitary in the Blue Mountains on 19 December, eight days after he went missing. Iredale was walking ahead of his two friends on the second day of a three-day bushwalk, planning to meet them at the Kedumba River. Later that day he made a phone call to emergency services and reported being lost. He was eventually found about 200 metres off a walking track in a steep incline on rocky terrain. A post-mortem ruled out obvious injuries, such as snake bite or a fall, with dehydration and exposure the most likely cause of death.

On New Year's Eve a 31-year-old man fell to his death over a 70 metre cliff after slipping on wet rock above Kanangra Walls in the Blue Mountains. He was in a party of three returning to the Kanangra Walls car park after completing the Danae Brook canyon. His companions were treated for hypothermia and shock.

VicWalk transforms into Bushwalking Victoria

The Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs (VicWalk) Inc was founded in 1934 to help prevent degradation of wild areas and represent the interests of bushwalkers in Victoria. President David Reid reports that some important changes have recently taken place, with the bushwalking peak body now called Bushwalking Victoria. The new organisation is governed by an elected Board of Management and will continue to represent the interests of bushwalking clubs, but will expand its constituency to represent all bushwalkers in Victoria.

Individual bushwalkers will be able to join Bushwalking Victoria and tap into the resources and statewide network. They can also participate in many of its standing committees and activities including search and rescue, track development and maintenance and conservation projects.

The changes will enable Bushwalking Victoria to strengthen its advocacy role to en-

sure the preservation of natural areas and the best possible amenity for bushwalkers now and in the future. For more information, visit www.bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

A mother of an achievement

In September 2006 a team of five Sydney mums, led by Brigitte Muir, tackled Europe's highest mountain, Mt Elbrus (5652 metres). There were many challenges in the lead up to the climb, not the least of which was the death of their first leader, Sue Fear, on Manaslu. Then 11 Russian and Ukrainian climbers perished in one day in a blizzard on the mountain—husbands and kids were not happy and planning took a massive backwards step. However, the women—Di Westaway, Annie Doyle, Amanda Jones, Meerie Barkle and Eileen Robberds—pushed on and finally reached the summit in 'perfect' freezing weather on 12 September. 🌞

CORRECTIONS AND AMPLIFICATIONS

Figure 3 on page 41 of *Wild* no 103 is incorrect. Achernar lines up with the long axis of the Cross, not with the bisect of the Pointers. The line between the Cross and Achernar is about seven times the length of the Cross. The approximate direction of south is halfway along this line (about four Cross lengths away from the Cross), where the bisect of the Pointers also intercepts the line. The Zeka Track was misspelt on pages 38 and 39 of *Wild* no 103. The phone number given for Paddy Pallin on page 65 of the same magazine was incorrect; Paddymade Sales can be reached on (02) 8799 2416.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Pahrnan, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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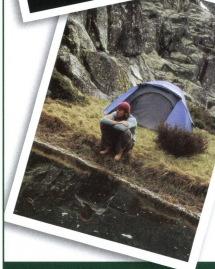
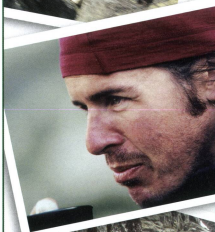
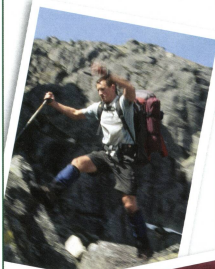
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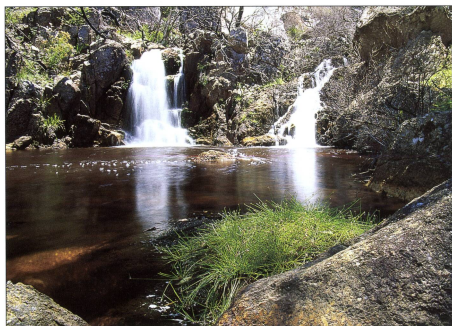
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Wilsons Promontory Wilderness?

Travis Easton takes the coastal route on an eight-day walk around Victoria's most loved park



*The lower tier of Roaring Meg Falls. **Left**, Travis Easton shows off his sunburn on top of the falls. Fenwick Bite is below and Rodondo Island on the horizon. All photos by the author*

WILSONS PROMONTORY HAS MORE THAN 400 000 visitor days a year. In summer the coastline around Tidal River has crowds more reminiscent of a Melbourne beach than a wilderness area. While it is a wonderful thing that so many people can enjoy this natural wonderland, is this use compatible with the wilderness values of the area? Is it possible for it to remain a wilderness with this sort of patronage? I have been to the Prom many times over the years and have walked almost every track, but when an unexpected opportunity arose to spend a week there in the January 'high season', I thought I'd try some of the other routes I've contemplated over the years. My plan was to link the southern and northern sections together in a mega-

circuit by traversing the rocks around the Cathedral, the mountain separating Sealers Cove from Five Mile Beach. I also wanted to stick to the coastline as much as practical, explore a waterfall I'd noticed on an old map, visit sites of historical significance and see how the bush was regenerating from the April 2005 bushfires. Wilsons Promontory: untamed wilderness or tourist Mecca? I was about to find out.

I arrived at the Prom early and decided to explore Leonard Point before walking to that night's campsite at Oberon Bay. The Point proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated, chewing up my first roll of film and six hours of my day before I knew it. However, it hides some wonderful coastline



that the casual visitor would never see. I enjoyed a chance meeting with an old friend while walking to Oberon Bay and explored the dunes there just as the sun set. The Frasers Creek campsite was very busy. In my excitement at leaving the big smoke I had neglected to pack sunscreen: this 'quick walk' ended up leaving me extremely sunburnt. My punishment for this oversight was wearing pants and a long-sleeved top during the next two days of sweltering heat.

On my way to Roaring Meg campsite the next day I stopped to take photos of a small and beautiful flower when a couple walked up. 'Ah, we have a botanist I see', the man said. 'No, just a lover of beautiful things', I replied. He informed me that I was looking at a *Scientificus complicatidie namus*, or feather flower, and a short but cordial conversation ensued. That's another aspect of bushwalking I love: there is usually camaraderie between walkers. In the city it's almost a social taboo to say hello to strangers, but in the bush it's standard fare—another re-humanising aspect of getting back to nature.

Wilsons Promontory is not known for its waterfalls but on an old map I'd noticed a waterfall dropping into Fenwick Bite. I'd never seen photos or heard anyone referring to it so I thought it wouldn't be very good, but worth checking out anyway. Soon enough I was there, standing motionless at the top of the falls, stunned. Below me a gigantic granite chasm dropped away into the blue, turbulent waters of Fenwick Bite. The falls

were huge, cascading to the ocean far below. To top it off, Rodondo Island was perfectly framed between the walls of the ravine. I was elated: this was the most incredible view I'd come across at the Prom, and with it a sense of discovery!

This is what bushwalking is about for me: leaving the 'busyness' of everyday life and unwinding physically, mentally and spiritually

I continued down the chasm and made my way around the cliffs to South Point, which was as beautiful as I remembered it. However, the legacy of war had reached even here. In 1940 a German ship laid mines in this stretch of water, sinking a British steamer. Inland, the army took over the Prom as a commando training ground, building the road through to Tidal River where barracks



South East Point and the lighthouse from the regenerating Lighthouse Track.

by communing with nature. There is also a part of me that loves to explore and lately this has been combined with a growing desire to capture photogenic landscapes on film. This spot answered all these desires, my sense of appreciation heightened by not knowing of anyone who had visited the spot. My incessant poring over maps and dreaming up new trips had paid off.

were set up. Trainee commandos reportedly shot anything that moved and this, combined with grazing, a drought, rabbits and the devastating fires of 1951, left the Prom a shadow of its former self.

By the time I got back to Roaring Meg it was 5 pm and I still needed to get to Little Waterloo Bay so that I could walk with the tides the next day. I arrived at the crowded

campsite after dark and, after eating, slept the sleep of the exhausted.

Rising early to catch the sunrise I continued in the big day tradition of my trip. The journey to Sealers Cove was much the same as on the many other trips I'd done along this stretch. However, my perceptions had been altered by some recent reading I had done on the history of the Prom. Refuge Cove's huge composting toilet is an unfortunate but necessary evil, but this intrusion is nothing compared to what used to stand here. In the 1840s whaling huts were situated on this spot, followed by a quarry a decade later. At about the same time, the now relatively pristine Sealers Cove supported a logging community of 60 people, exporting huge quantities of timber. The national

I was constantly climbing, leaping, balancing, descending and occasionally scrub-bashing over the convoluted mess of huge boulders and cliffs. With the constant menace of the surf at my side, I found it very wearing but enjoyable. It certainly drew on the skills I'd developed during many years of rockclimbing and gorge walking. As the hours wore on I developed a battle-like mentality, fighting my way along the coast. After passing the only reliable water source and potential camping spot, I rounded another headland and could see Five Mile Beach some hundreds of metres away. A few steps later, while descending yet another gully, a rock dislodged under me and I was thrown headlong down it. I let out a panicked shriek as the consequences of breaking a limb out

geous sunset over Freshwater Lake and the Vereker Range, followed by an ocean sunrise to die for the next morning. This is truly a remote and beautiful place.

The gorgeous sunrise meant another early photographic session as I madly tried to capture the magic, oh-so-short minutes of glorious light. I was soon trudging along the soft sand of high tide in the morning heat. With my goal always in view, it felt as though I'd walked for an eternity without getting anywhere. I did arrive eventually and relaxed for an hour and a half while the tide receded so I could traverse around the rocks. On previous occasions, I had taken the scrubby, inland route between Five Mile Beach and Johnny Souey Cove, but in keeping with my desire to explore the new, I kept to the coast.

Miranda Bay (named after a ship that sank there), Rabbit Rock, Monkey Point, Rabbit Island and Johnny Souey Point were most enjoyable, and although the traverse wasn't as difficult as the previous day, there was still plenty to keep me excited. I arrived at a deserted Johnny Souey Cove at 3 pm and collected some much-needed water from its perennial water supply, before a relaxing skinny-dip in the surf, followed by a freshwater rinse in the river. Life can be good.

The stillness of the next morning had the shutter clicking merrily at the perfect reflections on Johnny Souey Creek. I finally broke camp at 10.30 am with a huge day in front of me—if I had known how huge, I would have left much earlier. I rock hopped around the headland to the broad, flat and hard Three Mile Beach. The millions of soldier crabs that live here scuttled out of the way, burying themselves in the sand as I approached.



The author with a backdrop of South Point and Wattle Island. The April 2005 bushfires stopped here.

“I arrived at a deserted Johnny Souey Cove at 3 pm and collected some much-needed water before a relaxing skinny-dip in the surf, followed by a freshwater rinse in the river. Life can be good.”

park was gazetted in 1898 but logging began again: in the early 1900s 16 buildings and a 270 metre jetty were constructed. Considering this history, the area's present state is heavenly!

It had been drizzling on and off as I walked to Sealers Cove, which greatly concerned me as my schedule didn't allow for rest days caused by bad weather. Normally a little rain isn't a problem, but my coastal traverse of the Cathedral could potentially be very dangerous if everything wasn't right. Fortunately, the rain stopped and the swell was very mild when I reached Sealers Cove, so I decided to proceed, leaving at the lowest ebb of the tide. I passed cliffs, wildflowers and lichen-covered rock formations, at one point disappearing into a wet and slippery cave on the waterline, hoping a freak wave wouldn't take me out. I struggled along the rocks, passing some magical trees rising from the ocean. I was sweating bucket loads in the humid heat.

here flashed before my eyes. Fortunately, I received only minor abrasions but I was shaken: the Cathedral was fighting back!

By this time I'd been rock hopping for more than six hours and the tide had come in a long way, further complicating matters. Although my goal was tantalisingly close, it was out of reach for the moment, making my progress seem even slower and more difficult. Finally, there were only a few metres of boulders before the beach. But the route was guarded by dense clouds of midges; I was too tired to go around so I held my breath and ran, passing through three thick clouds before finally running on to the sand in a victory howl of relief, victory and midge-inspired disgust. I was rewarded with a gor-

At Lighthouse Point I passed into another area I hadn't explored before. The views from Hunter Bay impressed me immediately, but the surprise section was near Entrance Point. The northern tip of the Prom is in the process of rearranging itself into some new islands: masses of tea tree and banksias are falling into the sea, making for intriguing scenes of twisted and tortured wood succumbing to the powers of the deep. Once again I spent way too much time taking pictures of the gnarled wood, coral, seaweed and old fishing nets.

The area that I was worried about came just after Biddies Cove. From my previous trip to Tin Mine Cove I expected rocky headlands around Mt Singapore, but what I didn't

know was how rocky and precipitous they would be. It was an intimidating sight; this traverse would be very different from the Cathedral. There weren't any waves to speak of but the cliffs themselves were less broken, generally steeper and more slabby. If I went for a slide there'd be nothing to stop me and ending up with a pack on in deep water could be very serious. Should I retrace my steps or try the cliffs? The view of the Toora wind farms prompted me to check my mobile phone reception and this added safety decided my course. In any case, my water was low and it was getting late so I had to commit, one way or the other: if the worst came to the worst I could always bush bash around any impassable cliffs. A quick call to my wife to fill her in and I was off.

What followed was the most difficult, enjoyable and beautiful walking I had done at the Prom. The sun was low in the sky, producing beautiful colours in the water. It felt as though no one had ever set foot here before: I couldn't see any sign of land passage although there was some seaborne rubbish. The high passes over the precipitous headlands were difficult but offered great vantage points compared to the sea-level rock hopping. At Shelter Cove the setting sun forced me to unpack my camera despite my need for haste. After a few great shots I picked my way around White Dog Point to Freshwater Cove.

By this time it was completely dark as the rock hopping had taken four hours. In my thirst for water I rushed up the dry creek-bed by torchlight instead of checking the map: this showed the 'spring' to be at the other end of the beach; it ended up being two tiny puddles the size of bread plates. Initial attempts to get water stirred up the bottom, putting sediment though the water. A subsequent

attempt with a tablespoon in the second, shallower puddle proved painfully slow but much more satisfactory! After dinner I contemplated my surroundings. This must be the most remote section of the Prom coastline (on foot)—hard to believe that a hotel once stood here and that a township would have been built but for the bank crash of 1873. It is due more to luck than to any political determination that this particular spot is wilderness and even after the National Park was formed, this area was ex-

cluded. I am thankful that history turned out as it did.

After three extremely pleasant hours of walking the next morning I arrived at Tin Mine Cove, travelling via the beautiful and remote Chinaman Beach, Shallow Bight and Tin Mine Point. The tide was in but this didn't present much of a problem. The water and pit toilet at Tin Mine Cove were welcome conveniences. This cove gets its name from a failed attempt at mining tin from Mt Hunter in the 1920s. A pumping station that pumped sea water for sluicing over on Mt

I'd had a wonderful trip but was now in the home straight, looking forward to seeing my wife and kids and enjoying the comforts of home. I expected the last day to be a procession of familiar tourist beaches to the car at Tidal River but I was presently surprised. The wildlife along the firebreaks is the most prolific in the Prom and I saw many kangaroos, emus and even a deer before reaching the dry Cotters Lake and Cotters Beach. The generally ignored Cotters and Darby beaches were great, with numerous headlands of a completely different geology to the rest of the Prom breaking up beaches, and picturesque high cliffs and dunes at Darby River. I had lunch near the foundations of the old Darby River Chalet (1922–1949) contemplating what it must have been like in 1938 when my grandparents honeymooned there.

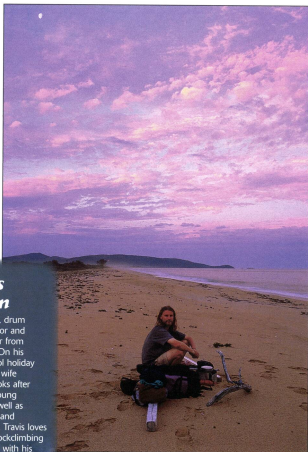
The combination of sea-level traverses, rain and scrub over the last two days had kept my feet in a permanently wet state and they were now very sore, with blisters and painful megawrinkles developing in my softened epidermis. I felt overdressed walking next to sunbathers on Whisky, Picnic and Squeaky beaches but I just wanted to get to Tidal River so I could remove my waterlogged boots. While walking the final stretch to Tidal River across Pillar Point I was reminded of another proposal for the Prom.

In 1960 permission was sought to build a resort complex on Pillar Point. This was to include accommodation for 600 people, halls, tennis courts, bowling alley, gymnasium, cinema, pool and housing for 200 staff. In 1965 the National Parks Authority signed an agreement with the syndicate for ten acres. However, the lessee was oblivious to the conservation aspects of the proposal and negotiations were protracted; the lease was cancelled in 1967. At Norman Beach I went for a swim in the crowded surf, thankful that it was trees, not buildings, that ringed the bay.

On the way home I contemplated my trip and the history of Wilsons Promontory. Over the years the area has obviously been exploited; some would argue that this continues today due to the number of visitors to the park. During my eight-day, 150 kilometre trip I saw every section of the Prom, from crowded beaches to former logging and mining areas. While some regions show obvious signs of man's presence, the overwhelming majority of the area is an untamed wilderness. Even skirting the coastal edges of this wilderness is a challenge; the inland scrub itself is practically impenetrable. These tracts of wilderness exist because of the hard work and foresight of conservationists. Victoria's oldest national park is their legacy. 🐨

Travis Easton

is a musician, drum teacher, author and photographer from Melbourne. On his regular school holiday getaways his wife graciously looks after their three young children. As well as bushwalking and photography, Travis loves ski-touring, rockclimbing and camping with his family.



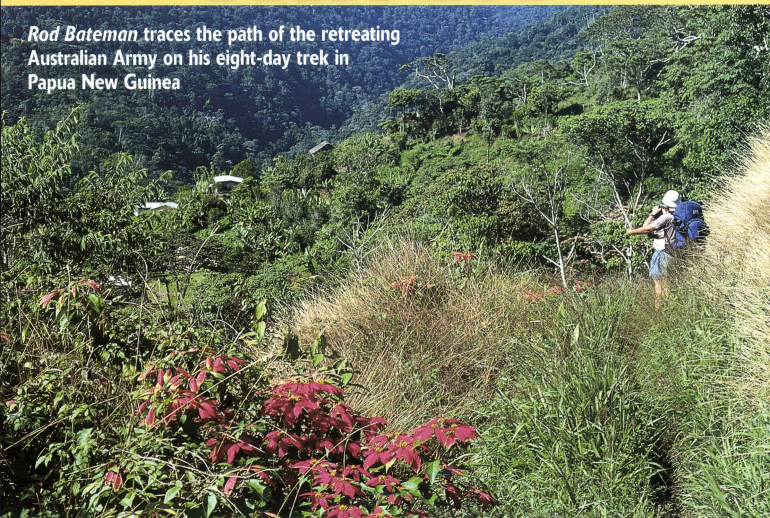
Travis cooking his meal at sunset on the south end of Five Mile Beach.

Hunter once stood on the point south of the cove.

Corner Inlet, Chinaman Long Beach and the Lower Barry Creek track have their own flavour and beauty—in many places you're following the idea of a track rather than its reality. It was a bit scratchy but I enjoyed this part of the walk for its variety. Near Chinaman Creek there is a button grass plain—very similar to ones I've walked in Tasmania—which is the only button grass plain I know of in Victoria, while the part that passes through banksia forest is also distinct. I was thankful that the Chinaman Creek crossing was dry as depths of one and a half metres aren't unknown. After another huge, mostly wet, day I made my camp in the Vereker Track firebreak near the Millers Landing car park. I hadn't seen a soul for three days.

The **KOKODA TRACK**

Rod Bateman traces the path of the retreating Australian Army on his eight-day trek in Papua New Guinea



IT WAS 6.30 AM AND ALREADY HOT AND steamy. I put on my pack and immediately got into a familiar rhythm behind the leader, knowing that my stiff and sore muscles would soon loosen up. Last night's torrential rain had just stopped and the lush, green vegetation was dripping as though each tree had an inbuilt shower. The view over the nearby ranges and across to Mt Victoria was almost surreal, the valleys shrouded in mist and the sun just touching the higher peaks

that we'd climbed during the last six days. I was well read on the war history of the Kokoda Track and I knew that it would be one of the most difficult bushwalks that I'd ever done, but I hadn't heard about its immense, natural beauty.

When I talked about doing this walk, people asked me why, as though there must be a special purpose. I wasn't retracing the steps of a fallen relative; I wasn't in search of a life-changing venture. But I was interested

Walkers look over the pretty village of Alola on the second day of the Track.
All uncredited photos Simon Knight

in the war history and wanted to experience the terrain where this campaign had taken place. I wanted to meet some of the local people and experience their culture. I wanted to do an extremely difficult bushwalk in an

unfamiliar environment and share the experience with my closest friends.

The Kokoda Track occupies a special place in Australia's history. It is the place where inexperienced and ill-equipped Australian troops confronted the might of the Japanese war machine that had marched, unhindered, through South-east Asia on its way to Australia in 1942. The track is a pinnacle for many Australian bushwalkers who are drawn by the lure of the Kokoda legend. At last we were there. We were soon to realise that it really is more than just a tough bushwalk.

The track starts at Kokoda village and traverses the Owen Stanley Ranges to Owers Corner just north of Port Moresby. The 100

kilometre track is so steep that walkers climb and descend a total of 5500 metres over that distance. It is hard. I struggle to understand how anyone could fight a war there.

We were advised that there are only three options for training: hills, hills and more hills!

So, each Sunday we met for a ritual walk at Mt Donna Buang near the picturesque town of Warburton outside Melbourne. It was a great training ground and quite realistic as it was steep, muddy and slippery with all of us falling on our backsides at some stage. It

“ I was well read on the war history of the Kokoda Track and I knew that it would be one of the most difficult bushwalks that I'd ever done, but I hadn't heard about its immense, natural beauty. ”



Clockwise from above left, reminders of the war history, such as this Japanese helmet, are everywhere. Walkers pose under the famous Kokoda archway. Rod Bateman. The Kokoda war cemetery is a stark reminder that too many young people died. Two trekkers with some of the local school children: how do they keep their shirts so white? Both photos Greg McPhee. **Below**, walking along the rim of the extinct volcano at Lake Myola. Bateman



even gave the necessary preparation for dealing with leeches. One rainy day we had at least 20 leeches sucking on to arms and legs but, with a quick touch of a match, they dropped off. They say it's all part of the training!

On Thursday nights we met at the Thousand Steps near Mt Dandenong, bustling for position with personal trainers and football coaches and their charges. There's a memorial to Kokoda at the bottom and small brass plaques evenly spaced to indicate villages and war sites. It's quite steep but quickly paled into insignificance once we were on the real thing. The regular walking with loaded packs, swimming four times a week, gym, jogging and cycling soon had us as fit as we could be. The guidebook

warned about walking too hard on the first few days and then collapsing, exhausted. If you take it easy, after the third day you can walk forever. We would remember this.

We chose to walk the track as an eight-day trek with local porters who carry tents, food and cooking gear. This would give us some control over our walking speed, the places where we would linger and where we camped, something other, more regimented trekking companies don't allow. You can do the walk as a fully self-sufficient party but, although experienced walkers can easily do it this way, to treat it as only a challenging bushwalk is to miss out on some of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences Papua New Guinea has to offer. Alternatively, fully guided treks with porters who carry every-

We took off and were soon cruising at an altitude that was no higher than the mountains around us. The plane appeared just to make it over the Kokoda Gap between Mt Blamey and Mt Victoria and provided a close-up view of the terrain. The area through which we would be walking over the next week looked very steep, rugged, and daunting.

The Kokoda runway was lush green grass between plantations of palm-oil trees but we couldn't even see it until the plane descended into the wide valley. The plane taxied to a stop and we had an audience! One group of fit-looking men (who turned out to be our porters) stood a short distance from another group of happy, chatting locals who were waiting to return to Port Moresby. After our equipment was unloaded from the plane there

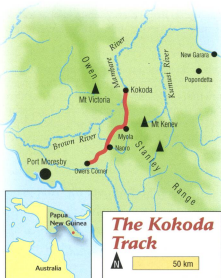


Steve Deards crosses a river between Alola and Eora on one of the better 'bridges' found along the Track.

thing are available. These trips can have up to 30 trekkers in the group and usually spend a lot of time on war history. If your main purpose for doing the trek is to experience the war history, then this may be the best option for you.

After all those months of training and preparation we were in Port Moresby. At 5 am the alarm woke me from a restless sleep and, after a hot shower and a quick breakfast, we were off to the airport to board the twin-engine Otter. We were all apprehensive and quiet, with the occasional nervous laugh, and I mulled over unasked questions. Would I be too slow? Would it be too steep? What if I got sick or injured?

was a stand-off, with trekkers and porters sizing each other up, we in our neat, high-tech bushwalking gear and they in bare feet. They were trying to guess who would have the heavy pack and who would be trouble to walk with (we'd seen footage of celebrities who couldn't cope with the terrain and cried most days), and we were trying to guess who would be good to be alongside for the whole trip. The stalemate was soon broken when the lead porter allocated everyone as he thought best and gave each porter a new uniform of red T-shirt, blue shorts and a red cap. Within half an hour of landing we were putting on our packs and taking the first steps of one of the biggest adventures of our lives.



The terrain was like nothing I have experienced in Australia. I had walked hills just as steep, but not all day for eight consecutive days. I had walked in the heat, but not in this humidity where you were saturated by 8 am and nothing dried. I had not seen such beautiful, dense jungle, with rocks and tree roots intertwined across the track so that each foot had to be placed deliberately to avoid twisted ankles and wrenched knees. I loved every step of it.

Walking down a narrow section of the track, one of our team, Greg, simply fell off! In a graceful movement that would have pleased an Olympic gymnast, he slipped on to his backside in the gully and slid down a vertical, three metre face. He had a few cuts and grazes on one leg but apart from

his dented pride was unhurt. He didn't respond well to my request for a photo before I reached down and dragged him up! It showed just how easily an injury could occur and what a real problem it could be without vehicle access for rescue.

I lost count of the river crossings. The locals call them creeks but I call them rivers. We could hear their roar as we slipped and slid down the near-vertical descent, knowing that each signalled the start of yet another lung-bursting climb. Some rivers are swirling cauldrons strewn with boulders and logs, with cascading rapids that would cause even the most hardened kayaker to balk. Some are peaceful and idyllic, inviting walkers for a swim and a quick cool off. The water is clear and icy cold, with the dense jungle

canopy obscuring the sun's warming rays. The bridges over the rivers are built from three or four logs of about 15 centimetres each lashed together with vines. The more difficult crossings have a semi-permanent vine strung across for a handrail or the porters quickly lay out a rope. These bridges are wobbly, slippery and quite precarious, but perfectly safe if you're careful and don't look down. They are even safer if you ask a personal porter to help you over.

Our porters were great—a key reason for the success of our trek. The head porter met us at the airport and was clearly a man of authority. His right-hand man was from Isurava village and introduced us to one of his wives the night we stayed there. He was as strong as a bull and with his mop of dreadlocks and wide, cheeky grin he was a natural and charismatic leader. Willy was the porter who led the walking every day and he carried a small shovel with which he would quickly cut tiny footholds on steep or slippery sections. He used his shovel just as a cavalry captain would use his cutlass, raising it when it was time to move and putting it in the ground when it was time to stop. He was a man of few words and when a tired trekker asked him how far to go his standard reply would be 'not far' or 'not long'. We learned not to ask questions and just to walk until Willy put down the shovel! Two porters had bare feet, one porter wore one running shoe, and another, one thong! Surely this was not how they would walk the Kokoda Track! They did, and were more sure-footed on rocks and mud than we with our expensive, European walking boots. I wish I'd had the foresight to bring something useful such as some decent runners or walking boots for them.

Some of our group had a personal porter carry their packs. They were a great bunch of people who were friendly, helpful, and had great delight in bringing out their relatives to meet us when we passed through their village. Their English was certainly better than our pidgin and we could communicate quite freely once they overcame their shyness. The bonds that developed between trekkers and their personal porters were a major experience of the trek. I didn't have one and missed this experience to a certain degree, so I would encourage people to use a personal porter unless they have a real desire to carry their own pack.

If you walk with your eyes closed you can avoid all the war history, but I suggest you don't. The museum at Kokoda is the largest on the track and is a tribute to the first battle between the inexperienced Australian militia and the Japanese. It was opened for us after someone found the person in the village who had the key. This museum has

The Kokoda Track

Distance: 105 kilometres from Kokoda village to Owers Corner.

Duration: most organised treks take 8–11 days.

Best time: the dry season between March and October.

Trekking options: fully self-reliant—organise everything yourself. Can engage porters as you wish.

Self-guided—general porters carry food and tents. They lead the trek but don't guide you on the war history. Personal porters to carry your pack are optional.

Fully guided—led by an experienced Australian who provides detailed commentary on the war history. Also includes general porters. Personal porters to carry your pack are optional.

Cost: approximately \$2000 per person from Port Moresby. This includes general porters, food, cooking equipment and tents. Prices vary between tour companies.

Weather: very hot and humid during the day but the nights tend to be cool in the highlands. It can rain heavily so be prepared for mud and wet conditions. The jungle canopy

provides shade but the sun is very bright and hot when the track crosses open grassland.

Clothing: shorts and a short-sleeved shirt during the day; light pants, a long-sleeve shirt and an extra layer to wear at nights. A light poncho is useful when it rains, but it will be too hot to wear it when walking. A good pair of walking boots is a must and a pair of gaiters is a great addition.

Food and drink: take snack food to eat during the day. Jelly beans, snakes and scroggin are good. You will drink about three litres of water each day while walking. The rivers are very clean but with the increasing numbers of trekkers you may want to sterilise drinking water.

Gifts: the tour companies have their own guidelines on gifts and gratuities for the porters. Contact your tour company for suggestions.

Useful web sites: www.pngtourism.org.pg and www.kokodatreks.com

Further reading: *The Kokoda Trek* by Clive Baker is a good book on walking the track. Peter Fitzsimons's *Kokoda* is a good book on the area's war history.



Early morning mist over the valleys and ranges from Nauro village, towards the end of the Track, show off the area's 'immense natural beauty'. Bateman

some display boards, a bronze statue of a 'fuzzy wuzzy angel' helping an injured digger and a machine gun in the corner. Two other villages have small huts that are loosely described as museums, containing a collection of rusty relics retrieved from the jungle long after the war was over. Once they were opened we were free to hold a rusty .303 rifle, Bren machine gun, or an unfired mortar. They were very heavy hard to imagine carrying them, in war, along the hills we had just climbed. It was an all too real reminder that we were following the path of the advancing Japanese.

I was aware that there was a memorial at Isurava but I wasn't really prepared for what I saw. A neatly maintained grassy area (thanks to the local keepers) with four marble pillars inscribed with four words dedicated to the diggers—Courage, Sacrifice, Endurance and Mateship. We stood at the memorial with our thoughts. In a respectful ceremony, Greg played the Last Post on the harmonica and I recited the soldiers' hymn:

They shall not grow old as we
that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor
the years condemn,
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We shall remember them.

As we reflected and surveyed the place where the battles had occurred I had a lump in my throat and everyone had a tear in their eye.

The campsites are either in villages or beside rivers in the jungle. The first night we camped at Hoi, which looked like Hobbiton with its small stream, grassy slope, and neat array of huts. As would be the case at every village we passed through or camped at, the villagers brought out some bowls neatly arranged with local fruits: paw paws, pineapples, cooked sweet potatoes and bananas never looked so good! The practice is to pay a small sum if you accept the food as a way of helping the villages to earn money. Tents were put up, we had a wash in the stream, spoke with the locals and waited for dinner. What would it be? Pasta, rice, a tinned-meat dish and dehydrated vegetables. The same as it would be for the rest of the trip!

Nauro has a brand-new guest house of which the villagers were very proud, a pit toilet of which nobody was proud, and a neat stack of aluminium cans that someone was collecting to cash in one day. We weren't too keen on staying in the guest house because of the risk of malaria and were stand-

ing around talking when the heavens opened. In the end we put up the mosquito-proof tent inners under the cover of the guest house for a very dry and comfortable campsite. The guest house was a two-level thatched hut that somehow had eleven little yellow tents pitched inside it. At least we were dry and no one caught malaria!

Our campsite at Myola was in a jungle clearing on the edge of a small swamp. The

to school each day. There are no buses or trains and Mum doesn't drive them if it's raining! They walk the few kilometres along the muddy track to the school beside the river below Naduri village. The school has six classrooms with timber desks and a blackboard with primary-school level English sentences and sums. I was amazed that one sentence was warning children no more than ten years old about the danger of HIV/AIDS and the precautions they should be taking!

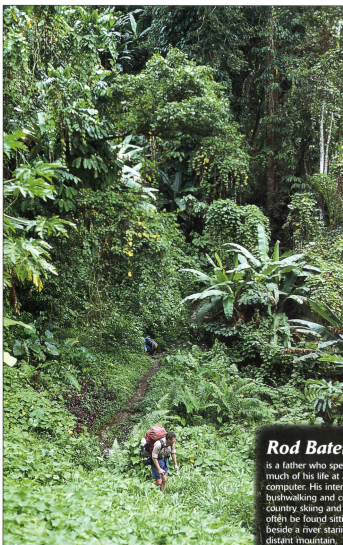
The eight days passed too quickly, and standing on the bank of the Goldie River at the bottom of the final climb we had less than one hour to go. Willy held his shovel aloft for the last time and we set off. After the euphoria of the river crossing and with saturated boots it was one foot after another, upward to the famous Kokoda archway. The obligatory photos were taken with hugs and handshakes all round. We sat in the shelter out of the sun for half an hour talking, resting, looking back from where we had come and reflecting.

The Kokoda Track was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had and I would encourage anyone who has ever thought of doing it to go ahead. I have done hard bushwalks before but this was a lot more than just a bushwalk. Along with my friends, I achieved what I had set out to do. I returned with memories of the villages

and the people who helped us along the way. I'll always remember the hills and the beautiful jungle, and I now understand the terrain in which the Kokoda campaign was fought. I've walked the hills and crossed the rivers but I don't even pretend to understand fully the conditions and the situations those young people would have experienced. We had made it, but in 1942, 2000 young Australian men didn't. I can't pay a better tribute than to recall the words on the monument at Brigada Hill:

They are not dead: Not even broken.
Only their dust has gone back home
to earth.

For they: the essential they:
Shall have rebirth, whenever a word of
them is spoken. ☛



John Holland walks through choko fields and lush vegetation near the beginning of the track.

Rod Bateman

is a father who spends too much of his life at a computer. His interests are bushwalking and cross-country skiing and he can often be found sitting beside a river, staring at a distant mountain, wondering what's on the other side.



noises that we heard from the jungle that night were enough to set your teeth on edge. Screeches and squawks overhead sounded like something out of a Tolkien novel, interspersed with a weird repetitive, 'tak, tak, tak' that would have had you sitting with your back firmly against a tree if you were a lone young soldier 65 years ago. The black bats fled in a huge formation when I shone my bright torch into the treetops.

We used the Kokoda Track as the source of our short adventure but the children from the surrounding villages use the track to get

NOT SO GENTLE Central Queensland

Meg McKone and a group of 'mature' bushwalkers tackle some tricky terrain on day- and overnight walks

WHERE CAN OLDER BUSHWALKERS GO TO DO interesting, challenging walks that are within their capabilities? On a month's trip to the highlands of central Queensland, a group of 'oldies' ranging from their mid-50s to almost 70 found one answer.

We already had some experience in this area. Some of us had walked up beautiful but popular Carnarvon Gorge and climbed Battleship Spur to the plateau above. Some had visited lesser-known national parks but limited ourselves to day walks from the official camping grounds due to lack of numbers. We had all liked what we had seen—trackless ridges with fascinating rock formations, colourful cliff-edged gorges, hidden valleys and beautiful forests. Despite the ruggedness of the terrain, the relief was only 200–300 metres so it was possible to experience spectacular scenery without having to toil up and down many hundreds of metres of hillside. There is still a wriggle left in many an ageing bushwalker and it was time to get a larger group together to explore further afield.

We spent our first week at the Ka Ka Mundi section of Carnarvon National Park. The ranger in Springsure informed us that most of the springs needed for overnight



Top right, enjoying the view of the Rothesay Peaks from North Yarraman Hill in the Ka Ka Mundi section of Carnarvon National Park.

Right, Jenny Williams soaks up the sunshine from the north-east side of the tunnel through Wappilka Ridge, Isla Gorge National Park. All photos by the author



walking were dry, so we rearranged our plans to do several day trips. Ka Ka Mundi is a plateau with two main ridges leading north, separated by extensive plains. As the areas of greatest interest are on the ridges, we avoided the broad valleys with their long stretches of dry brigalow scrub.

Our first night was enlivened by a mob of brumbies pounding past our tents to the waters of Bunbuncundoo Spring. Feral animals are a problem throughout the area and we encountered many more before the month was out. The next morning a short walk along

of the area had obviously found it appealing too; the cave walls were covered with stencils of hands and artifacts, and numerous carvings in the soft sandstone. We had only to look up the valley to find the probable origin of the ochre used for the stencils—a long, red cliff about a kilometre off proved to be crumbling away to form handy-sized crayons of the stuff.

Where to next? We had thought of heading east to one of the basalt pyramids and perhaps on to the Thumb, but a tangle of burnt sticks across the grasslands of the plateau changed our minds and we tried the opposite direction. We explored some turreted spurs and an unexpected little gorge with a river of white sand meandering down the middle of it. This is part of the charm of the area—just climb 100–200 metres on to a ridge and then explore whatever features look interesting. As we lunched and dozed (we were seniors, remember!) in the warm autumn sun beneath an eroded sandstone

sloping run of rock led safely down. We crossed a shallow valley to Mt Mooloolong, which soon loomed large and menacing above us. It only took 15 minutes to circumnavigate; I suspect that no one has ever risked death to climb this crumbling monolith.

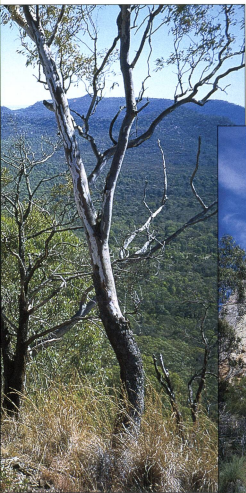
Perhaps our most interesting walk in Ka Ka Mundi was the ascent of the park's namesake and a higher hill behind it, followed by an exploration of the ridge to the south. Perched 300 metres above the valley floor, we felt on top of the world as we gazed over the plateau, its white fingers of sandstone pointing eastwards towards the broad Wharton Creek valley and the rugged Buckland Tableland beyond. Beneath us, at the junction of the sandstone and the basalt pile on which we were sitting, was evidence of an Aboriginal stone quarry where outcrops of harder rock had been broken open and stone chips scattered around.

Siding a hill on the plateau instead of climbing over the top seemed like a steep and scrubby mistake until we saw the cliffs on the other side. The next hill provided an exciting ascent through more crumbling cliff-lines and a totally unexpected view of a narrow, white sandstone formation which resembled the Bread-knife of northern New South Wales's Warrumbungle National Park. Now

As we lunched and dozed in the warm autumn sun beneath an eroded sandstone pinnacle, Eric murmured to his wife, 'This is the life, Pat! Let's move to Queensland'.

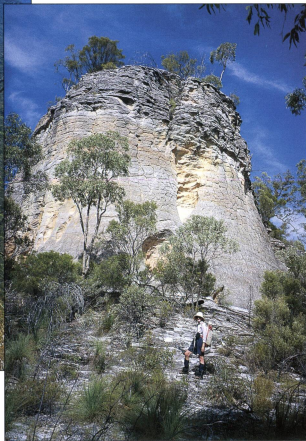
we had to find our way down through the cliffs back to the cars. At first we thought we would have to retrace our steps to get past what looked to be a continuous cliffline, but we finally found a steep descent route at the head of a nearby gully.

After the isolation of Ka Ka Mundi, the camping ground at Salvador Rosa seemed crowded. However, a short climb to the base of Sentinel Bluff on the ridge behind camp quickly took us away from the campers. From here we crossed the head of a valley amidst the spicy smell of spinifex resin and amused ourselves by climbing some of the turrets on the way to the next ridge. At the top of one turret I yelled, making the others think I'd seen a snake. In fact, I'd just looked down through a slot in the crumbly sandstone and seen the deep overhang below me.



a ridge above our camp gave us an overview of some of the more interesting features of the park. On the western ridge was the prominent, white sandstone spire of Mt Mooloolong with nearby Cave Hill squatting above the ridgeline, leading north to the rounded basalt contours of North and South Yarraman Hills; on the eastern ridge was a line of pale cliffs topped by lumpy sandstone hills and basalt pyramids of scree. One feature in particular caught our eye—a thin sandstone pillar bent slightly backwards which we called (with the appropriate digital gesture) the Thumb. Although we were to see it beckoning us from a distance many times during the next week, we never managed a close-up acquaintance.

A walk up the ferny gully above the spring led us to an overhang with a pleasant outlook over the little creek. The Aboriginal inhabitants



Rock pinnacles dot the ridges of the central highlands. Pat Pickering admires an example in the Ka Ka Mundi section of Carnarvon National Park.

pinnacle, Eric murmured to his wife, 'This is the life, Pat! Let's move to Queensland'.

As the name suggests, Cave Hill has a series of overhangs around its base and is worth exploring. The top of the hill gave us a much closer view of Mt Mooloolong and a vista across the dark sea of scrub to the jumbled peaks of Salvador Rosa, 20 kilometres to the west. At first we doubted that we would be able to descend Cave Hill by way of its narrow, northern spur, but a steeply

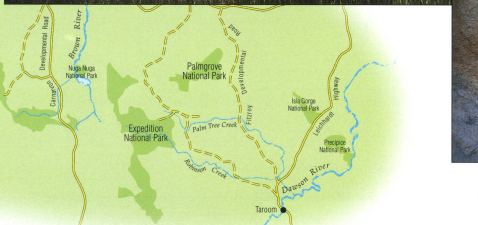
Our destination for the day was the ridge on the northern side of Finnegan's Plains, a broad, dry valley which opens into the Nogoa River. Although it looked straightforward on the map, the ridge was a maze of knife-edged pinnacles. Finally we climbed a flat-topped hill layered with six clifflines for lunch with a superb view. Surrounding Finnegan's Plains, the ridge would challenge younger and fitter walkers to circumnavigate the whole valley. After lunch we found a way down on to the Plains, then to the sandy Nogoa River where we washed off the dust and sweat in its shallow, spring-fed waters. The next day, from the top of Mt Salvator on the other side of the river, we were able to pick out our route.

Our plan to carry food for four days up the Nogoa River to set up a base camp and explore some of the side valleys and ridges was foiled by toothache. Forced to leave Salvator Rosa to phone the dentist (who recommended antibiotics) we decided to make

It was a day memorable for wildlife. Checking out some small caves in the cliffs alongside Marlong Plain, we startled a small, bushy-tailed wallaby which paused, its dark hands delicately poised, before it shot off again. Eric's lunchtime naps had progressed to 40 winks after morning tea, and on this occasion a wedge-tailed eagle circled over us then

far over the horizon were the headwaters of Camarvon Gorge, where another group from our party was toiling up Battleship Spur.

We left the plateau by way of a dry rain-forest gully, looking for overhangs containing Aboriginal paintings. A deep, square-mouthed cave with thin shelves of rock hanging precariously from its roof had a rather spooky



the long drive to the Mount Moffatt section of the park. Here, many of the interesting rock arches and pinnacles are within easy reach of the road. As bushwalkers, however, we felt compelled to do more, so we navigated across country to Devils Canyon, a gorge at the base of a dry waterfall with soft, water-sculpted cliffs of the most amazing salmon pink colour. That afternoon, Eric and Pat climbed Mt Moffatt while Frank and I spent a few lazy hours at the camping ground.

We crossed Marlong Plain on a sparkling, clear morning when the water in the rock holes reflected the blue sky and the lush grasses shone green and straw yellow in the sun. A band of dark forest topped with low, white cliffs surrounded the plain on which grazed kangaroos and emus—a veritable antipodean Garden of Eden.

returned for a closer look. It must have decided either that Eric was too big to tackle or that he was still alive as it finally flew off, perhaps to pursue the wallaby.

The sandstone spur on which we rested curved round to join a plateau capped by a narrow, semicircular ridge of basalt—our destination for the day. Amongst the large macramias of the plateau, we surprised a small mob of brumbies which ran off but then, to our consternation, turned and approached us. Not wanting to be trampled to death on such a beautiful morning, I shouted, 'Go away!' in the most imperious voice I could muster. The lead stallion considered this order for several long seconds, then wheeled around and cantered off with the mob. From the top of the basalt ridge we had a great view across Marlong Plain and over layered ridges to the top of the Great Dividing Range. Not

atmosphere so we stayed near its entrance. Suddenly, from the dark ledges deep inside the cave, a being with huge eyes silently materialised and flew around on scalloped wings, trapped by these unexpected humans at its front door. I screamed and the others, thinking the roof must be falling in, almost climbed over me in their haste to get out, while the powerful owl made its escape amidst the confusion.

After two weeks of day walks we were looking forward to shouldering our rucksacks for a longer trip, exploring the gorges of Expedition National Park. A visit to the ranger in Taroom gave us some hope of finding adequate water and routes through the almost continuous cliffline for our five-day journey from the top of Glenhaughton Creek down into Robinson Gorge and back by way of Spring Creek. After wading through the

Straights, we found virtually no water in the sandy creek-bed for six kilometres, so it was just as well that we'd loaded up with several litres each. Next, we passed several kilometres of soaks, badly fouled by feral pigs. Our heavy packs were quickly losing their charm by the time we found a clean trickle with a suitable campsite amongst the cabbage palms nearby.

Next morning at a creek junction we came upon a beautiful cave, its sandstone walls glowing golden in the early sun. As we climbed the short slope below it for a closer look, a red hand revealed itself high up on the cave wall, silently declaring prior occupation. Now the only evidence of use was from the calling cards of feral cattle. We continued through forests of palms and tall, pink-trunked eucalypts, the cliffs becoming higher the further we travelled downstream. After surprising several groups of feral pigs and cattle, it was a relief to chase a flock of brilliant king parrots along in front of us.

The dry junction with Robinson Gorge provided a pretty

between two cliffs, but the going became so rough and slow that we gave up and explored Andys Creek instead. With its big yellow, grey and orange cliffs, large pools and beautiful trees it was well worth a look.

On our final night we camped a kilometre up Spring Creek, finding a few small pools in the side creek where the ranger had told us we would find a 'get-down', as the Queenslanders call them, to take us back on to the plateau. Perhaps we were up the wrong creek, since our attempt to follow his directions took us into a gorge so narrow that we were unable to progress further. Although the men of the party reckoned we could climb out from here, a few minutes studying the surrounding cliffs gave me serious doubts, so we women retreated downstream to attempt a shallow gully which ascended to a low cliffline just below the top.

Urged on by a hint of quiet desperation (if this route didn't go we were faced with a multikilometre detour to find another pass), we helped each other up a chimney followed by a very steep and slippery slope to the base of the three metre cliff, topped by another slope littered with loose rocks. By some miracle the band of sandstone was hard instead of rotten; however, the handholds were awkwardly placed and I wasn't prepared to attempt the climb with my pack on and risk a long tumble in this isolated spot. We needed a bloke to climb the cliff and take our packs.

Where is a good man when you need him? Ours were still futilely stuffing around where we had left them half an hour before. After a lot of calling and more stuffing

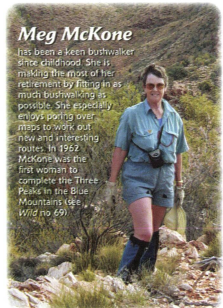
our climb, but couldn't bear to look over the edge. The rest of us didn't even try.

Our final trip was four days at Isla Gorge, a small park of narrow, turreted, sandstone ridges pierced by caves and arches and dissected by dry creeks. The best water was in a reedy soak below Gamu Waterhole, so when Di found a nice, flat spot up a nearby hill, we had a perfect base camp. To our north-east was Wappilka Ridge, a desirable destination because of the tunnel reputed to pass right through it. After an hour spent searching, we finally located it—a remarkable hole at the base of the cliff where two caves on either side of the ridge had merged. We walked through it into golden sunshine and on to Observation Peak and beyond.

Our last full day was one of the best. We decided to explore a turret visible from our

Meg McKone

has been a keen bushwalker since childhood. She is making the most of her retirement by fitting in as much bushwalking as possible. She especially enjoys poring over maps to work out new and interesting routes. In 1962 McKone was the first woman to complete the Three Peaks in the Blue Mountains (see Wild no 69).



Planning a trip?

Access

Except for Isla Gorge, a four-wheel-drive vehicle is necessary. Dirt roads become impassable mud after rain, so it is essential to carry spare food and water.

When to go

Summer is the wettest season and very hot. Daytime temperatures should be pleasant from April–May until September–October. Winter nights can fall below freezing. Waterholes are likely to be freshest in autumn. Spring wildflowers are magnificent.

Information

I found the National Park Rangers at Springsure and Toowoomba very helpful. Charles Warner's guide *Exploring Queensland's Central Highlands* was invaluable and provided many of the place names. We also used 1:100 000 topographic maps.

Warning

The area is very dry and water can be hard to find.

A few of the many Aboriginal hand stencils found throughout Queensland's central highlands. These were on a sandstone overhang in the Ka Ka Mundi section. Above left, the grassy Marlong Plain in the Mount Moffatt section of Carnarvon National Park is 'a veritable Garden of Eden'.

lunch spot with views of the colourful cliffs above, red callistemon overhanging the broad, sandy creek-bed and little flocks of butterflies. We thought that Eric, flat on his back in the sand, was having yet another doze until he announced that he had observed six different species of butterfly. We made camp at the junction with Surprise Creek—an excellent location with good water only 100 metres away. The next day we set off for the Cattle Dip, a long, deep pool

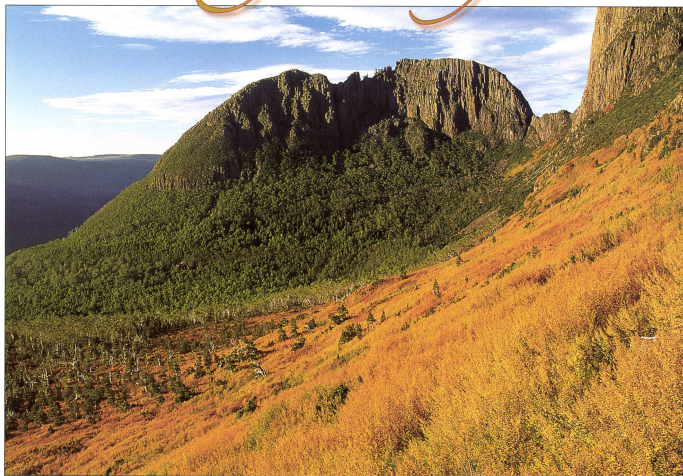
around, Frank and Eric were at last on top of the cliff, carefully clearing away the worst of the loose rocks so that we could form a chain to pass the packs. We didn't use the scramble rope in case it dislodged any loose material on to our heads. What elation and gratitude as we all safely reached the top! Frances went back twice to take a photo of

base camp, reaching the top by way of a tortuous zigzag route. Further along the same narrow ridge we found what Isla Gorge is famous for—extraordinary rock formations in the most remarkable colours. On one side was a series of caves in alternating bands of ochre and yellow, with a round, narrow hole that went right through the ridge. It looked as though a tree had been deposited with the parent sand and had lasted long enough to leave its shape in the hardening rock before rotting away. But it was the other side of the ridge that really took our breath away. Here the fragile rock had weathered into intricate shapes of amazing colours, from the palest pink to deep, dusky red, interspersed with layers of cream, yellow, orange and mauve. It looked for all the world like a coral garden.

A good test of a walk, I think, is to ask yourself afterwards whether you would want to visit the area again. I'd like to explore 'the Breadknife' and 'the Thumb' in Ka Ka Mundi, spend some time up the Nogoa River in Salvador Rosa and check out more of the cliffs and ridges in Isla Gorge. There is certainly enough intriguing off-track walking in central Queensland to bring back this senior bushwalker. ●

A southern, golden fall

Grant Dixon captures autumn in Patagonia and Tasmania



*The slopes of the Du Cane Range, in Tasmania's Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, are one of the few places where broad swathes of Tasmanian deciduous beech (*Nothofagus gunnii*) occur, putting on an autumn display reminiscent of Patagonian *Nothofagus*.*

Right, autumn colour in Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi in Argentina's Lake District.



LATE APRIL SOJOURNS IN TASMANIAN HIGHLAND AREAS ARE AN ANNUAL EVENT FOR many local walkers seeking the golden hues that denote the autumn foliage of the deciduous southern beech or 'fagus' (from *Nothofagus gunnii*), Australia's only winter-deciduous native tree. Fagus is found mostly in isolated patches and the occasional broad swathe near the tree line, generally surrounded by evergreen trees and shrubs. In many parts of the northern hemisphere, autumn is a different experience as deciduous species are numerous and extensive, resulting in spectacular arrays of colour encompassing entire landscapes. But in one area of the southern hemisphere, the Patagonian Andes of southernmost South America, there is a similar display.

From late March, hues of red, orange and golden-yellow cloak the slopes of the compact but rugged mountains of Tierra del Fuego, at 55° south, from sea level to tree line. More than 1500 kilometres further north in the Lake District, similar autumn colours are at their peak in late April, clothing the mostly volcanic peaks above 1000 metres in elevation.

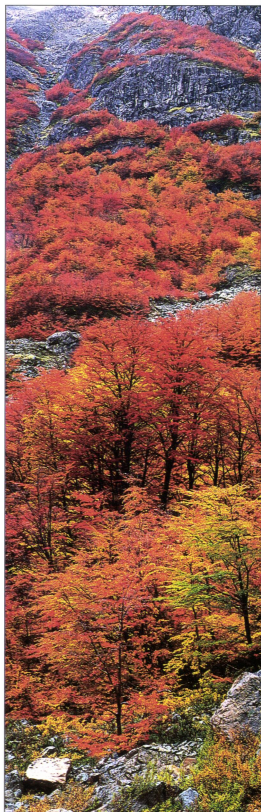
The concept of Gondwana, an ancient supercontinent that included countries from Antarctica to India, is well known, with the component countries often displaying links to their shared past. In many ways such links are most graphically displayed in the southern temperate regions—Tasmania, Patagonia, and also New Zealand—which were once parts of Gondwana and are all now situated between 40° and 55° south, dominated by a westerly wind regime, and with wet, rugged and forested western areas.

The ancient links between these areas are probably most evident in the vegetation—this link is apparent to the non-botanist visitor today and is also well studied through fossils. The so-called Gondwanan flora includes what are now predominantly rainforest and alpine species in Tasmania, many of which have close relatives in Patagonia and New Zealand. The similarity of the existing flora of the regions is a function of their current geographic position, past and present isolation, climate history and present climate. The botanical links are perhaps most apparent in the floristically simple, temperate rainforests.

Related plants in the different regions are not identical: they have evolved during the more than 50 million years the regions have been separated. However, in some cases the present-day similarities are breathtaking, exemplified by the southern beech forests. Walking in the temperate rainforest of Tierra del Fuego or beneath the Torres del Paine has the same feel as many highland forests in New Zealand, and the foliage of Patagonia's lenga (*Nothofagus pumilio*) is almost identical to Tasmania's fagus.

Two extant *Nothofagus* species occur in Tasmania (and another on mainland Australia) and seven in Patagonia. The autumn colour of Tasmania's fagus is well known, and four of the Patagonian species are also deciduous (although not all occurring in the same area). These—especially lenga, the canopy species in many areas—provide the spectacular displays reminiscent of a northern hemisphere 'fall'.

Walking opportunities in Patagonia abound, from day walks to true wilderness exploration, and autumn colours can be viewed throughout the region. There is a range of particularly accessible walking options in the Lake District, straddling the Andes (and the Argentina–Chile border) in northern Patagonia, and in the far south in Chile's Torres del Paine National Park. The mountains of Argentina's Tierra del Fuego are also quite accessible. Lonely Planet's *Trekking in the Patagonian Andes* is a useful reference.





*The endemic pehuen (or monkey puzzle), trees emerge from a dense shrubbery of lenga (Nothofagus pumilio) near the tree line in Chile's Parque Nacional Huerquehue. **Far left**, details of a Tasmanian deciduous beech's autumn leaves in Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park. **Left**, lenga shrubbery near the tree line in the Comarca Andina region of Argentina's Lake District.*

Grant Dixon is a widely published, Tasmanian-born nature and travel photographer and a professional natural scientist. He is chronically attracted to cool-climate landscapes and has explored parts of all seven continents. Patagonia is one of his favourite parts of the planet (after Tasmania, of course) and he has returned three times to date.

The Valley of

John McLaine relates an epic trip down the New River in South-west Tasmania that nearly

IN LATE DECEMBER 2001, DAX NOBLE, Graeme Pennicott and I set out to travel through the remote and rarely visited New River region of Tasmania's South-west Wilderness World Heritage Area. The entire catchment of the New River lies beyond the reach of recognised bushwalking routes, making it fabulously wild. The only exception is the South Coast Track, which crosses the outlet to New River Lagoon at Prion Beach. Many walkers who pass that way gaze up the mysterious valley, wondering what lies beyond.

In 1824, Lieutenant James Hobbs, the first European to visit the coastal fringes of the New River valley, wrote: 'The country appears totally unfit for any purpose useful to civilised man, being nothing but very high mountains, covered to the summit with impervious brush.'

In the 1870s and 1880s at least three parties tried unsuccessfully to establish a route from Port Davey to the settled east coast via the rugged New River catchment. Osborne Geeves wrote of the third attempt in 1881: 'But oh, the scrub, the scrub, the dense, everlasting, interminable scrub...I called it The Valley of Horrors.'

From 1900 to 1902 Tasmania's legendary bushman TB Moore was contracted by the Surveyor General's Department to cut an access track from Port Davey to the east coast via the New River valley. Dense scrub and steep ridges had to be negotiated and ladders constructed and fixed over rock faces. His party eventually broke through from west to east, having cut through what Moore described as 'scrub and country the worst ever experienced'.

Due to the difficulty of the terrain this route was soon abandoned, and for the last 100 years documented visits have been very rare. While researching our trip, the most recent venture into the upper New River that I could uncover was by the Sydney University Bush Walkers in 1982.

We planned thoroughly, making a fly-over aerial inspection and carrying custom-designed, scrub-resistant expedition packs and gear. On a drizzly, cold morning, we set off from Farmhouse Creek. Each of us was weighed down by massive packs containing 12 days of provisions, bushwalking gear and paddling equipment.

Graeme Pennicott demonstrates the wilderness lilo approach somewhere in the middle reaches of New River. Right, Dax Noble dwarfed by his pack as he looks towards New River Lagoon from high on the Crest Range. All uncredited photos by the author



Horrors

cost him his life

Dax: You know when you get dubbed the 'brawn' of the trip that your pack is going to be heavier than the rest. I remember weighing my pack at home and telling John it weighed 31.5 kilograms—to this was added about two kilograms of extra 'communal' gear. We were dropped off by John's brother Rob and he picked up each of the packs and said: 'Oh you've got the lightest, John...and yours is definitely the heaviest, Dax.' You see, John dubbed himself the 'brains' of the trip—I began to understand what I was in for.

With such heavy loads, we were content to reach the base of the Crest Range on day

one, and prepare for the next day's strenuous ascent. This was every bit as tough as we expected, entailing steep, slippery crags and strenuous grovelling through thick, tangled scrub. The range is rarely climbed and there isn't an easy route but the highest reaches offered glorious ankle-high vegetation, the only easy terrain for days. We topped out inside a dense cloud in late afternoon and decided to camp high with hopes of morning views of Federation Peak and Mt Hopetoun.

In our best luck of the trip, the third morning was fine and the entire south-west was spread before us—a smorgasbord of peaks, almost all of which had been climbed

by at least one of us. Nestled high in the Crest Range lies the jewel-like blue water of Satellite Lake, above which soars the most fantastic wilderness cliff, approximately 100 metres from base to summit and overhanging all the way, just begging to be climbed.

From the summit of the Crest Range we began our descent into Tasmania's wildest valley: we didn't see a sign of people or their passage for the next six days. We had been warned that the scrub on the southern flanks of the Crest Range might be 'character



building' and it was: hour after hour of pushing through complex pandani mazes, deep moss-choked gullies, and craggy cliffs with vines and trees clinging at impossible angles.

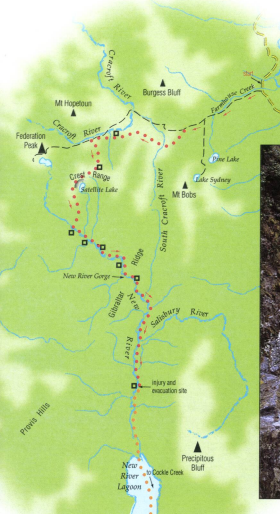
Travel through thick Tasmanian scrub is very hard even with light loads but with 31

the top of my pack, later to become my paddle. Unfortunately for the 'brawn' of the trip, one needs to consider such things when they're first in line!

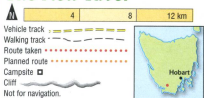
Virtually every log, whether standing or fallen, was covered in fragile moss, up to 20 centimetres thick. In the week when *Lord of the Rings* opened in cinemas nationwide, we forced our way deeper and deeper into our own 'Middle Earth'. Finally, our first glimpse of the New River evoked more of Geesee's words of 120 years ago: 'Crossed a silent stream, running through moss-

steeper than most Tasmanian rivers, and for the next couple of days the river was contained at the bottom of tight chasms. Gorges with cliffs hidden under the rainforest made for very tough travel, which continually changed from strenuous scrub portages to river-rock scrambling. During two hard days in which we managed to cover only four kilometres, we encountered an unnamed rock arch over the river and a section where the entire river disappeared underground, only to resurface 100 metres downstream.

There was much more landscape activity on this river than on any other I've travelled in Tasmania, even though the underlying rock



The New River



kilograms it is incredibly strenuous. Dax, the youngest and fittest of the party, shouldered the lion's share of the scrub leading. At one point my guidance was unwelcome as Dax pushed a line under yet another vine-choked, horizontal log: 'Just a bit lower, Dax.' Dax's riposte: 'I'm already on my stomach, how much lower should I go?'

Dax: John had a four-piece paddle especially made for the trip which fitted neatly into his pack. Over the years I had learnt the value of a pack that contained all your equipment, without anything protruding or strapped on the outside. However, I didn't think too much of the pole protruding from



A typical portage above the New River—scrubby, scrambly and strenuous. Right, the New River Gorge, a wild and mysterious place.

covered sticks as silent as death.' We squeezed the tent into the first of many improbable sites on the steep valley wall, close to the water.

This would be the first major river descent for Graeme and Dax, while for me it would mark the completion of all the major Tasmanian wild rivers. The difficulty of the approach walk precluded the use of any craft other than lilo, which with practice can be a stable and responsive (albeit minimalist) raft. The pack is secured to the lilo with a quick-release cinch-strap and the paddler sits upright, using the pack as a backrest. A full wetsuit is worn, as well as neoprene socks inside lightweight walking boots. A kayak paddle that can be dismantled and contained within the pack completes the kit.

Stretches of runnable water below the tent teased us into inflating our lilos and donning wetsuits to paddle the next morning. Rain squalls and chill winds accompanied us on to the river. The valley flanks were much

covered sticks as silent as death.' We squeezed the tent into the first of many improbable sites on the steep valley wall, close to the water.

These middle stretches of the river were very difficult: we had to travel through scrub, paddle and rockclimb, all while weighed down by heavy packs. In a couple of places our short length of rope was invaluable for pack hauling and belaying each other over slippery rock faces. The weather kept us constantly cold in the water, while the scrub portages in our wetsuits warmed us up. At night the tent was squeezed into ridiculously precarious sites. The fifth night was New Year's Eve and, exhausted after another strenuous day, we crashed out by 9 pm.

Dax: You hear people talk about walking two kilometres in a day and you think that they must be slow or not good in scrub: that is, until it happens to you! On our first

two days on the river we covered four kilometres. We were up walking and paddling early and travelled until we were exhausted.

If I could transport you briefly to any stretch of the New River to see its sheer beauty, the gentle sections we passed on day six would be my choice. We found giant King Billy pines of perfect symmetry scattered through tall, straight myrtles, leatherwoods

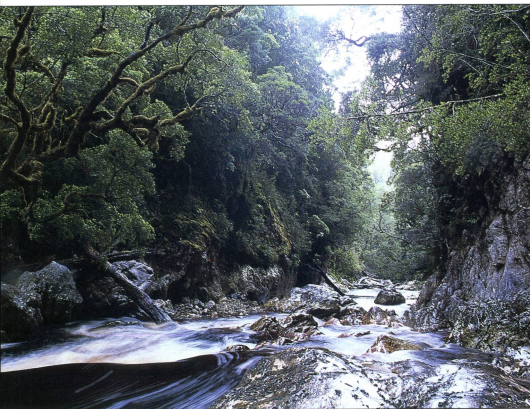
incredible, jungle-clad cliffs. Squalls of rain had become more insistent during our days on the river but the water levels had been good, neither too high nor too low. We entered the gorge with a degree of nervous tension, knowing that the consistent rainfall might lift the river height while we were inside the gorge. The route-finding challenge through the gorge provided excellent sport, and finding satisfactory portage lines past the sections of the deepest chasms that

difficult portage. Graeme took the lead and it soon became obvious that we would have to work hard to reach the vast, flat plains across which the river sprawled. It was some distance before the river left the final V-shaped valley, which was dominated by steep, boulder-strewn rapids, impossible for our little boats to handle.

We deflated the lilos and put them back in our packs as we resigned ourselves to a lengthy portage. The steep bluffs forced us high and the scrub was as malignant as ever; every metre of progress was earned by hard work. We leapfrogged leads for three hours until finally we saw the beginnings of a negotiable section of river and bashed down to give it a go.

We launched tentatively, with only limited views ahead, but the hard work was behind us. It was brilliant, fast paddling and we made the outrageous distance of five kilometres in the next hour! The valley walls disappeared and the rainforest receded across the flats surrounding the river. We whooped with elation—we had finally reached the flat plains before New River Lagoon.

The river continued to grow as tributaries entered, each extra litre of flow adding size and power to the rapids. We pushed on in cold rain, pausing briefly at the junction of the mysterious Salisbury River, home of the fascinating Vanishing Falls. The river gradually became tamer as it spread wide across shingle banks. We had begun paddling five days earlier at an alti-



and sassafras, sheltering an abundance of lush ferns, moss and creepers. Smooth river rocks glistening with fresh rain framed sun-dappled water diffracting a glorious spectrum of colours while still, dark pools of unknown depth alternated with quickening runs of rapid water. We felt the solitude of a wild valley and found untouched natural beauty to match the mental images we had anticipated.

Although lilos can be reinforced they remain fairly fragile. A spare is essential to allow progress to be maintained, unless a stop is forced by a second rip in a day. Over years of lilo travel, we've settled on a bombproof repair technique that can handle even the most massive rips: the rip is stitched together and a bead of seam-grip run over the stitching. The entire area is then patched with quick-contact adhesive before the outer edge of the patch is secured with seam-grip. Late on day six, we ensured that every lilo was in top condition as we approached the journey's most daunting obstacle.

We knew the transit of the New River Gorge on day seven would be 'interesting'. It's a massive feature as impressive as any river gorge in Tasmania and rarely visited. The river splits the Gibraltar Ridge in two to a depth of about 300 metres, producing

couldn't be paddled was extremely satisfying.

As we exited the gorge in the late afternoon the rain was intensifying and the river level creeping higher. Downstream of the gorge the river remains steep, tumbling over a series of huge boulders for quite some distance. We camped in our first flat site for a week, under a canopy of beautiful rainforest. By now, our teamwork was getting very slick and we were pleased with ourselves: we knew the next day's paddling would become significantly easier as we worked our way downstream towards the New River Lagoon through the virtually sea-level stretches.

It rained throughout the night and, although day eight dawned cold and wet, our mood was buoyant as we tackled the final,

tude of 400 metres and were now only 12 metres above sea level.

At about 4 pm we lined up three abreast above a set of standing waves that looked pretty easy. A consensus: 'Start central, draw left to avoid those logs, then exit.' I pushed off first and an unseen cross-current kicked in about halfway—I knew instantly that we had underestimated this final rapid. I drew left as hard as I could, but I was swept into the logs on the right. I slipped off my boat in an attempt to push it up on to the top log, which was close to water level. It was a nasty spot but I was getting back under control and had forced my boat into a good position.

The other guys knew the drill—wait until the paddler in front is safely through—but

“I recognised this as a very significant (and possibly terminal) moment of my life: if my legs remained stuck, this would be the position from which my body would be retrieved.”

unfortunately Graeme had overcommitted. He attempted to paddle past me but the cross-current slammed him into my back, driving me partially under the logjam and into deadly trouble. He bounced off with a shouted, 'Sorry John!' and careered off downstream, clutching my boat, which had swept off the log with the impact. My body was now being forced slowly under: the water was at chest level and both legs were jammed to the thigh in a constrictive sub-aqueous hole.

When confronted by possible death, your mind turns instantly to loved ones and thoughts of a future lost, before quickly returning to the situation at hand and considering every possible action to stay alive. With my left hand I clung to the black, slimy log. Graeme's lilo and pack were wrapped tightly around my torso, the full force of the water squashing the breath from me and dragging me down. I figured that if I could get rid of Graeme's boat, I might have a fighting chance. I tried to heave it away with my right hand, and sought the valve to deflate it—no such luck. In desperation, I clawed at the fabric of the lilo, attempting to rip it. Dax was trying to work his way down the river bank to me and I shouted to him for help. I gathered my thoughts for a few seconds. Dax was attempting to reach me but I knew there was nothing he could do: Graeme, downstream dealing with his own crisis, had the throw-rope in the pocket of his paddling jacket. I was on my own.

Chest heaving, I realised that holding on was quickly consuming my reserves and didn't offer a solution, only an extra minute or so. My legs were completely trapped but had limited rattling space. If I committed my body to the current, there was a chance they might rattle free—either that or I would drown under the logs. If forced to fight for a gap between the logs, I thought it was better to do it while strong than exhausted and, in that moment of decision, I released my left hand's grip on the slimy bastard log.

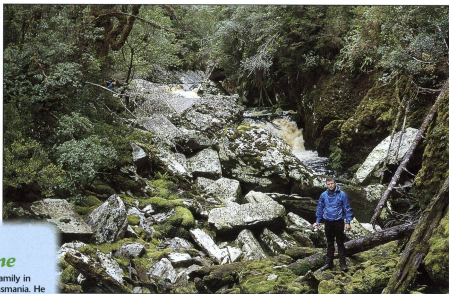
The current whipped my head under in a flash, leaving Graeme's lilo and pack in my place. I recognised this as a very significant (and possibly terminal) moment of my life: if my legs remained stuck, this would be the position from which my body would be retrieved. I held my breath and shook my legs furiously. My changed position altered the alignment of my legs and they shook free. I pinballed under the remaining logs head first, my forearms up to protect my face, and struck several logs before I was spat out, tumbling into safer water. Gasping, I lay on my back and kicked to the steep, muddy bank, hauling myself out like a beached seal.

I pushed down the bank to where Graeme had come ashore with my boat. The adrenalin had masked the pain of a severe blow to my chest, received during the fight with the logjam, and the pain was beginning to set in. I recognised that I needed basic treatment for shock and let the guys set up camp while I got into dry, warm clothes. Graeme's pack popped out of the logjam some time after I did and he managed to retrieve it.

At this point I was still focused on completing the final four days to Cockle Creek

disbelieving as we sat and waited in the rain. We had come so close to sea level, almost completing the passage to New River Lagoon and the easy South Coast Track home.

The helicopter found us about noon, and descended to hover just above the shingles. The paramedic jumped out to assess our situation and a few minutes later we clambered into the hovering helicopter and were on our way to Hobart, buffeted by strong winds and rain squalls.



John McLaine

lives with his family in Launceston, Tasmania. He has been bushwalking, paddling, climbing and skiing in the wild parts of Tasmania and beyond for more than 25 years. His wilderness photography was first published in *Wild* in 1983.



The author seems perplexed by the disappearance of the river. Luckily it resurfaces 100 metres downstream. Dax Noble

under our own steam, but we decided to monitor my condition and assess the situation in the morning. I spent a virtually sleepless night: sometime around 2 am I realised that I was too badly hurt to continue. I woke the guys at our usual time, 5:45 am, and showed them the huge red circle that had appeared in the middle of my chest. There was an intense, localised pain in my left ribs, within the general storm of pain across my chest. I tried some tests

to establish my range of movement and it was obvious that I would be unable to paddle or carry a pack. I needed professional medical attention. We examined all our options for self-evacuation and finally looked at each other in silence as we struggled to accept the fact that we needed external assistance.

The three of us have been voluntary participants in police search and rescues for years but never anticipated needing help ourselves. We packed up and identified a potential helicopter landing site on a shingle bank. After Graeme and Dax spread out our red lilos in a highly visible array, we activated my EPIRB at 9:30 am. As well as the chest pain, I felt sad, disappointed and

The rescue service was extremely supportive, and the police later issued a press release praising our management of the situation, which gave us some comfort. An hour or so after our rescue I sat in a hospital ward, waiting for the X-rays that would reveal two broken ribs, watching the dark water of the New River ooze out of my sodden boots to form a brown pool on the clean floor. Our journey through 'The Valley of Horrors' was over.

Postscript

In November 2005, I returned to the New River with Matt Brain, Robert Daniels and Dale Lisson. On this occasion the main objective was the double summit of the Provis Hills, arguably one of the most difficult and rarely climbed peaks on mainland Tasmania. To get to the Provis Hills, our group carried kayaks along the South Coast Track (easier said than done), then paddled up the New River Lagoon and the New River to reach a point from where the scrub-fest of climbing Provis Hills could begin. When we returned to our high point on the river, near the site of my accident three years earlier, Robert produced four Guinness cans from a secret stash hidden at the bottom of his two monstrous rucksacks—a fitting way to toast our climb and celebrate my successful return to the magnificent valley. ☺

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Walking (and liloing) the Shoalhaven River

Paul Elwood takes us on a spectacular, if tricky, walk through New South Wales gorge country



John Murray looks down to the Shoalhaven Gorge from the top of Needles Pass. Both photos by the author

THE WATERSHED OF THE SHOALHAVEN RIVER READS LIKE A LIST of iconic bushwalking destinations: the northern Budawangs, Ettrema, Deau National Park and Bungonia Gorge. Cutting an impressive and rugged gorge stretching for over 100 kilometres, the Shoalhaven is one of the great wild rivers of NSW. The lower gorge between Bungonia Creek and Tallowa Dam is probably the most spectacular example, hemmed in by sheer sandstone cliffs and only accessible by a handful of walking tracks. Much of the southern side of the gorge in this section is part of the Ettrema Wilderness.

Although the area is occasionally visited by canoe, the lower gorge is largely overlooked by walkers. The trip described here uses two passes through the cliffines for a four-day circuit walk, which includes two 100 metre waterfalls, excellent river walking, deep, clean swimming holes and the isolated, rocky pinnacle of Billy Bulloos Crown. The walk is equally accessible for canoeists—the lower gorge can be reached by a 12 kilometre paddle from Tallowa Dam.

When to go

The walk can be done in any season; however, the height of summer is not the most pleasant time to walk the plateau areas.

But summer is a great time to lilo the river (see below) and take advantage of the endless swimming holes and beaches along the Shoalhaven. Even after extended dry spells, the two waterfalls will usually be flowing as they are fed by extensive swamps. A river-level reading of around 0.20 metres at Fossickers Flat is a typical base flow-level for the Shoalhaven, allowing easy river crossings. After heavy rain the river may be difficult to cross. (Visit www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/wrap_fwo.pl?IDN60144.html or follow prompts from www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/nsw/rain_rivers.shtml for daily river levels.)

Liloing

Travelling by air mattress is an awesome way to see the river, and is usually as fast as walking along the bank. The section from Badgerys Crossing Place downstream to Fossickers Flat can be paddled on lilos rather than walked. For those who would prefer not to carry the extra weight of a lilo over the plateau, they can be paddled to Canoe Flat and left there for collection on the return journey.

Between mid-October and mid-March the river is usually warm enough to lilo without a wetsuit.

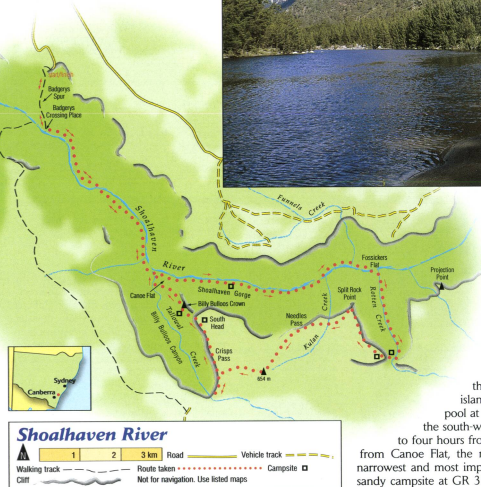
History

Despite being remote and wild, the rich mineral and water resources of the Shoalhaven River have drawn the attention of numerous enterprises over the years. Small-scale miners explored and prospected for alluvial gold along the river during the late 1800s and early 1900s, while huge mining ventures such as the Tolwong Mines used aerial cableways to reach the gorge from the plateau. Large mineral leases still exist along the Shoalhaven Gorge.

More recently, the NSW State Government's plan to drop large areas of the Ettrema Wilderness in the lower Shoalhaven Gorge brought renewed focus on the river's conservation. Under the plan, the Tallowa Dam wall would have been increased in height by nearly seven metres, resulting in extensive inundation to near Fossickers Flat. The Carr Government's proposal highlights the fact that wilderness in Australia is by no means safe from large-scale development.

Further reading

The Man from the Misty Mountains by James Henry Sturgiss and *Fitzroy Falls and Beyond* by the Budawang Committee are excellent references on the history of the lower Shoalhaven Gorge and surrounds. The story of the Aboriginal Billy Bulloo and his secret gold reef are particularly interesting.



Access

The walk starts near Tallong, which is seven kilometres off the Hume Highway from Marulan on the Highland Way (about halfway between Goulburn and Mittagong). At the General Store in Tallong, head south along Caoura Road. After three kilometres, turn right on to another sealed road (signposted to Badgerys Lookout) and follow it for four kilometres to the car park at Badgerys Lookout.

Tallong Railway Station is about 100 metres east of the General Store, with train services several times a day.

The walk

A well-worn walking track heads north-west from the car park, then wraps anticlockwise around the base of the cliff before descending south to Badgerys Crossing Place. The track is well defined and you can reach the grassy clearing at the foot of the spur at GR 346466 in an hour.

From here the route proceeds downstream, staying on the north-east bank. For the first few hundred metres a faint foot-pad can be followed. The route along the river between Badgerys and Fossickers Flat is through a mix of casuarina forest, light scrub and sandy beaches, with some rock hopping along steeper narrow sections of river bank. Overall the walking is easy to moderate.



Canoe Flat is the end of the road for these lilies. Billy Bulloo's Crown looms behind.

Shady rest spots, campsites, sandy beaches and clear, deep swimming holes are regularly spaced along the river.

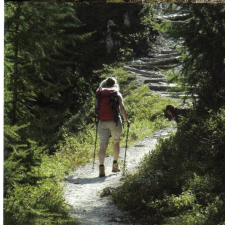
After rounding a large bend in the river at GR 355453, you'll reach a steep sandy beach on the north bank. Cross the river downstream by way of a small island of casuarinas at the bottom of a wide pool at GR 358453. From here the route follows the south-west bank until Canoe Flat, a walk of three to four hours from Badgerys Crossing Place. Downstream from Canoe Flat, the route follows the south bank along the narrowest and most impressive part of the Shoalhaven Gorge. A sandy campsite at GR 392429 is a reasonable target for the first night; it is about one and a half hours from Canoe Flat. The deep swimming hole and tall cliff opposite create a magical atmosphere.

Day two

From the campsite, continue downstream along the south bank where you'll have excellent views of Projection Point from the narrow, rocky bank opposite Funnels Creek. After approximately

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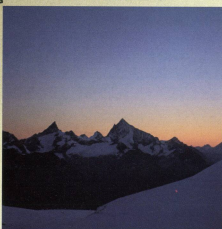
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two hours, the wide beach at Fossickers Flat is reached.

From Fossickers Flat the route proceeds south along Rotten Creek to the waterfall at GR 429409. Fill your water bottles before leaving the Shoalhaven as the lower part of the creek is often dry. Contrary to its name, Rotten Creek has pockets of rainforest, deep, clear pools and waterfalls and exposed, rocky bluffs with excellent views.

In the lower part of the creek, the walking is fast and easy on flat banks. Stinging trees and nettles are common along the creek, so gaiters and long pants are recommended. The creek becomes progressively steeper and more rugged, with several waterfalls and exposed rocky bluffs. In several places the route will not be obvious

THE WALK at a glance

Grade	Moderate to hard off-track walking. Two steep, demanding passes
Length	Four days
Distance	34 kilometres
Type	Deep, rugged river gorge, with interesting passes through steep cliffines to adjacent plateau
Region	Southern tablelands of NSW
Nearest town	Tallong
Start, finish	Badgerys Lookout
Map	Caoura 1:25 000 Land Information Centre
Best time	March–November
Special points	Rugged wilderness scenery, swimming holes, little-known passes and two huge waterfalls

and it will take some scouting to find the best way through. The foot of a large rockfall (shown on the map) is the most difficult section to negotiate as the route deviates around the largest boulders. It is possible to walk and scramble up the circuitous route without resorting to climbing. In the rockfall area, take particular care on large, loose boulders and scree.

After about four hours' walk from the Shoalhaven, a sheltered campsite at the foot of a 100 metre waterfall marks the end of the second day. This impressive site has room for no more than three tents. After very heavy rain, however, the site may be submerged. In this case parties are advised to continue for another 30 minutes to a dry campsite on the cliff top at GR 427412, described in the next day's walk.

Day three

Before leaving Rotten Creek, fill water bottles with sufficient supplies for the four-hour trip to the unnamed falls on Tallowall Creek.

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From the campsite, head across the contour (bearing 350°) for about 40 metres to where an open ramp leads uphill on the northern side of the rock slabs. From here, the route heads up the slope on an approximate bearing of 280 to 290 degrees. Amongst the jumbled rock outcrops and thick mess of scrub and vines between the campsite and the plateau it will be difficult to stay on a bearing. Instead, concentrate on keeping a course parallel to the cliffline at about 70 metres to the north-east. This will avoid the steep, sheer slopes at the base of the cliff and the boulders and fallen trees further to the north-east. Follow the route for about 300 metres until it gradually converges with the main cliffline where it swings north. At the foot of the main cliffline, proceed due north for about 80 metres, until reaching a break in the cliff. At the base of the pass (GR 428412), the main cliff is divided into two layers. Ascend the obvious ramp on a bearing of about 235° for about 80 metres until you summit the rocky plateau. This is the alternative wet weather campsite for day two and has excellent views of the valley below.

From the top of the pass, proceed north-west along the rim of the amphitheatre towards Split Rock Point, from where the route continues south-west along the cliff-top to the head of Needles Pass. Water can often be found in pools in Kulan Creek. Open forest with light to moderate undergrowth allows uninterrupted views and rapid progress along this 'scenic rim'.

From the top of Needles Pass, head south-west over the knoll (marked 638), continuing on to another knoll (654), then follow the ridge west through some moderately heavy scrub to reach the cliff at GR 386406. Rucksacks can be left here for the side trip to Tallowal Creek falls. Take water bottles to collect water for the dry, third night's camp at South Head. Beside the cliff-edge, light forest makes for easy walking with extensive views over Billy Bulloos Canyon to reach the creek near GR 385402. About 50 metres upstream of the falls, a break in the minor cliffline gives easy access to Tallowal Creek and 200 metres west a rocky lookout provides the best view of the falls.

Return to the packs by the same route, then proceed north towards South Head. Between Crisps Pass and South Head, the undergrowth thickens substantially. Allow one hour for the walk from the falls to South Head. The flat areas of the plateau above South Head offer a selection of campsites for the end of day three, with grand views over Billy Bulloos Crown and the gorge.

Day four

An early start is advisable on the fourth day, particularly in winter, to ensure the final

ascent of Badgerys Spur is not done in the dark.

The descent from South Head to Billy Bulloos Crown is steep and somewhat airy, but quite safe for moderately experienced walkers. The correct route should not entail technical down-climbing, nor excessively exposed ledges. Ropes are not required for the pass. From South Head, it is important to follow the route closely to find the correct pass. It may take up to an hour to find the correct route and negotiate the pass.

The head of the pass begins about 30 metres south of the main point of South Head. From the top of this gully, there is a

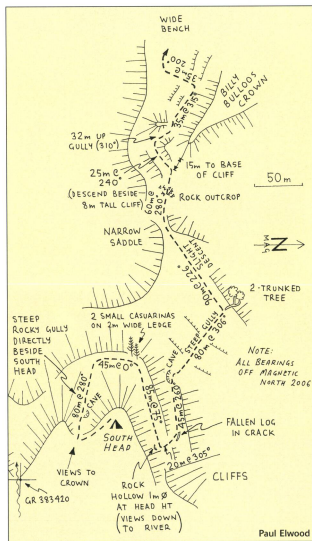
extending up into the rock wall. This position is confirmed by steep cliffs immediately to the east and is almost exactly level with the top of Billy Bulloos Crown. From here, walk directly down the slope (through a break in the small cliffline) for about 20 metres, bearing 305 degrees. The lowest part of this slope has a fallen log lying in its axis. From the bottom of the fallen log proceed on a bearing of 260°, walking slightly downhill along a bench for 45 metres to a pocketed cave. Descend to the base of the cave on a sloping rocky wall (three metres), then walk 80 metres down a steep, indistinct gully on a bearing of 306 degrees. At the bottom of the indistinct gully is a eucalypt with two stems growing from a horizontal trunk. From there, proceed along another bench on a bearing of 226° for 90 metres to the narrow saddle between Billy Bulloos Crown and South Head.

From the saddle, the route leads for about 60 metres up a rocky ridge to the tail of the Crown, about 15 metres south-east of the main cliffline. The route now slides beneath an eight metre cliff on a bearing of 240° for 25 metres, then proceeds up a gully for 32 metres at 130° to the back of a rocky spur. From the rocky spur, the wide, flat area to the south-west of the Crown can be seen. To reach the flat, descend about 35 metres on a bearing of 315° before the final scramble down to the flat. The wide, flat bench is strewn with boulders and marks the end of the technical navigation through the pass. From here, continue in a north-westerly direction under the base of the cliffs to pick up the main spur at GR 378424 which descends to Canoe Flat.

The route follows the well-defined spine of the spur, negotiating some impressive rocky outcrops. In the middle section it has magnificent, clear ridge walking, with expansive views on both sides. As the blunt foot of the spur is reached, head hard to the south for about 50 vertical metres above Canoe Flat to avoid the steep scree slopes where the spur ends. Allow three hours in total to negotiate the pass and descend to Canoe Flat from South Head.

From Canoe Flat, the route follows the river along the same course as on the first day. Allow three-four hours to reach the foot of Badgerys Spur, then a further one and a half hours to ascend to the car park. Fill water bottles at the Shoalhaven River for the ascent of Badgerys Spur. ☛

For Paul Elwood, happiness is low-tech adventure and a clear, starry night on the banks of the Shoalhaven without a tent. He is currently planning a cycle tour across the Nullarbor with rubbish-tip bicycles and op-shop camping gear.



full and clear view of Billy Bulloos Crown. On the map, a gully with a watercourse is shown intersecting the cliff at GR 382420. This larger gully is 90 metres further south-east, and is *not* the correct descent pass. Head into the first gully, 30 metres south of South Head. Walk for about 80 metres down the gully (bearing 280°) until you reach an obvious bench heading north. The route travels north along the bench for 45 metres, until you reach a narrow point with two casuarina trees, where it swings right along the foot of the cliff at 75° for 85 metres.

After 85 metres you'll see an oval-shaped cave one metre in diameter at head height,

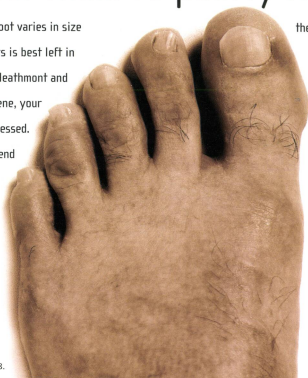
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The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveys are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild*'s editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

It's BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE BOUGHT A PAIR of bushwalking boots, not from lack of use but because I purchased a quality pair four years ago. As an outdoor educator, I decided to spend a bit more in order to gain extra durability and support. This proved a wise choice as my boots have rewarded me with years of comfort, stability and blister-free walking over some rugged terrain in pretty foul conditions.

Like anyone buying a pair of boots, I considered my requirements and the likely conditions in which the boots would be used before making a decision. Most of my bushwalking is done as a guide on multi-day trips in steep, remote, poorly tracked areas. As with many people, my ankles have been weakened by past sporting injuries so it is important that my boots provide sufficient support to the lateral and medial ligaments of my feet to reduce the risk of sprained ankles. Experience has taught me that whilst it is possible for my clients to complete multi-day walks carrying moderately heavy packs

without supportive boots they will typically be the ones who suffer sprained ankles and slow the progress of the rest of the group. Stiff, high-sided boots were the answer for me. However, this style of boot is usually quite heavy and hot. Day walkers carrying light day packs, especially on well-graded tracks, may find such boots cumbersome and would be better served by lighter, lower, more flexible boots. As with most equipment purchases, careful consideration needs to be given to the range of conditions in which the boots will be used. This survey covers footwear suitable

for a range of bushwalking uses, from short, lightweight walks on easy tracks, through to heavy multi-day treks in difficult terrain.

Although *Wild*'s focus is on specialist outdoors retailers, some brands may be found in shops not tailored specifically towards bushwalking, such as sports, fishing and workwear outlets.



Graeme Owers goes looking for new boots in all the wrong places! The 'Boot Tree' grows on the Heaphy Track, New Zealand.
Stephen Hamilton

Boots for bushwalking

	Suitable for	Weight, grams	Ankle height, centimeters	Sole rubber	Upper material	Flexibility	Water resistance	Durability	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
AKU China/Italy/Romania www.aku.it											
Energy Low	D	430	7	S	CN	H	●	●●	●●1/2		160
Lhasa GTX	D/W	580	12.5	M	CS	H	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	Gore-Tex lining	250
Era GTX	D/W	560	13.5	M	S	M	●●●	●●●	●●●	Gore-Tex lining	300
Asolo China/Romania www.asolo.com											
Tasman XCR	D	435	8	S	CN	H	●	●●1/2	●●	Gore-Tex XCR lining	250
Fugitive	D/W	645	13	M	CS	L-M	●●●	●●●	●●●	Men's and women's sizes	330
TPS 520 GV	E	800	14	M	FL	L	●●●●	●●●●	●●●1/2	As above; Gore-Tex lining	400
Colombia China www.columbia.com											
Peregrine	D	415	8	S	CS	H	●	●●	●●1/2		150
Bonzan Peak	D/W	665	13	M	CS	M	●●1/2	●●	●●1/2	Waterproof lining	170
Mudruga Peak GTX	D/W	675	13.5	M	CS	M	●●●	●●	●●1/2	Gore-Tex lining	200
Garmont China www.garmont.com											
Flash II XCR	D/W	505	10	S-M	CN	M-H	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	Gore-Tex XCR lining	230
Synco	W/E	655	12	M-H	FL	L	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	Men's and women's sizes; Gore-Tex lining	300
Dakota	E	880	13	H	N	L	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	Men's and women's sizes; one-piece upper	440
Hi-Tec China www.hi-tec.com											
Pioneer	D	610	11	S	CS	H	●●	●1/2	●●	Men's and women's sizes; waterproof lining	160
Altitude	D/W	600	12	S-M	N	M-H	●●●	●●●	●●●	As above	250
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au											
Hounslow Sympatex	D/W	650	11	M	CS	M	●●	●●	●●	Men's and women's sizes; waterproof lining	300
Randonee Proof	W/E	685	13	M-H	FL	M-H	●●●	●●●	●●	Waterproof lining	390
Keen China www.keenfootwear.co.nz											
Targhee II Mid	D/W	505	11.5	M	CN	M	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●	Men's and women's sizes; also available in low-cut version	280
La Sportiva Italy/Vietnam www.lasportiva.com											
Zodiac Mid	D/W	520	11	S-M	CS	M	●●	●●	●●●	Also available in low-cut version	200
Thunder GTX	W/E	670	13	M-H	N	L-M	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	Men's and women's sizes; Gore-Tex lining	300
Tibet Anfibio GTX	E	700	15	H	FL	L	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	One-piece construction; Gore-Tex lining	440
Merrell China www.merrell.com											
Mesa II Low	D	410	7	S-M	CS	H	●	●●	●●	Also available in midheight version	180
Cadence Mid Waterproof	D/W	610	10	S-M	S	M-H	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	Waterproof lining	220
Pulse II Mid	D	515	12	S-M	N	H	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	Men's and women's sizes; waterproof lining	250
Mountain Designs Thailand www.mountaindesigns.com.au											
Ricochet	D	450	9	S-M	CN	H	●	●●	●●		190
Kananga	D/W	530	12.5	M	CN	M	●●●	●●●	●●●	Men's and women's sizes; Gore-Tex lining	280
Tasman	W	695 #	14	M-H	N	L-M	●●●●	●●●1/2	●●●●	Women's version called Highland	300
Raichle China/Romania www.raichle.ch											
Stream XCR	D	450	8.5	S-M	CN	H	●	●●1/2	●●	Gore-Tex XCR lining	250
Scout GTX	D/W	610	15	M	CS	M	●●●	●●●	●●●	Men's and women's sizes; Gore-Tex lining	300
Mountain Trail GTX	W/E	790	15	M-H	N	L-M	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	One-piece construction; Gore-Tex lining	440
Rockport China www.rockport.com											
Trails Edge	D	460	10.5	S-M	N	M-H	●	●●	●1/2	Low tongue webbing	280
Rock River China www.rockriver.com											
Mallard	W/E	755	14	M-H	FL	L-M	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	Waterproof lining	240
Rossi Australia www.rossi boots.com.au											
290 Barron	W	610	12	M	N	L	●●●	●●●	●●●●	Waterproof lining	200
110 Rapor	W/E	715	13	M	FL	L-M	●●●1/2	●●	●●●●		250
Salomon China www.salomon sports.com											
Extend Mid XCR	W	510	12	M	CN	M	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	Men's and women's sizes; Gore-Tex XCR lining	270
Alp 6 GTX	W	615	16	M-H	CS	M	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	Men's and women's sizes; Gore-Tex lining	300
Adventure Trek 7	E	760	16	M-H	CN	L	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●●	Gore-Tex lining	340

Boots for bushwalking continued

	Suitable for	Weight, grams	Ankle height, centimetres	Sole rubber	Upper material	Flexibility	Water resistance	Durability	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
Scarpa Italy www.scarpa.net											
Trek	W/E	685	14	M	FL	L-M	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	Available in standard and wide fittings	260
SL	E	810	14	H	FL	L	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●		400
ZG 10 GTX	E	765	15	H	N	L	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	Gore-Tex lining	450
Timberland China www.timberland.com.cn											
Summitscape	D	570	12	M	FL	H	●●	●●	●●	Seam-sealed construction	220
Chocorua Trail	D/W	510	13	S-M	CN	M	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	Gore-Tex lining	250
Vasque China www.vasque.com.cn											
Ranger 2	D	620	11	S-M	CS	H	●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	Men's and women's sizes	150
Zephyr	D/W	710	13	M-H	N	M	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	Available in standard and wide fittings; also available in Gore-Tex version	230
Sundowner Summit GTX	W/E	880	13	H	FL	L	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●	Men's and women's sizes; available in standard, narrow and wide fittings; Gore-Tex lining	400

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Suitable for:** Day walking, Extended walking, Weekend walking **Weight** is for a single size-41 boot **Ankle height:** maximum height above top of sole for a size 41 boot **Sole rubber:** Hard, Medium, Soft **Upper material:** CN combination nubuck, CS combination suede, FL full-grain leather, Nubuck leather, Suede **Flexibility:** High, Low, Medium # weight is for the women's version † not seen by referee **The country** listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Suitable for

In the table I used three categories to indicate the most suitable use for each model. Light, low-cut boots are really only suitable for day walks when carrying light loads. They are quite flexible and allow plenty of ventilation, with quite grippy soles. However, they don't give a lot of support and usually have softer rubber than heavy-duty boots and wear more quickly. Weekend walking requires extra equipment, so larger, heavier packs are carried. Stiffer, heavier, higher boots will be needed to provide the necessary support for stabilising feet, ankles and knees under these heavier loads. Extended walking usually includes heavy loads, remote locations and difficult terrain. Suitable boots will have hard, long-wearing soles, stiff shanks, high sides and provision for extra waterproofing.

Weight

The weights listed were measured by the surveyor on an electronic scale and are for a single size-41 boot. (There can be some variation in these figures between otherwise identical samples.) With the present trend towards lightweight equipment, be careful to compare the disadvantages, as well as the obvious advantages, of lighter boots. Lightweight boots will lack the stiffness

necessary for carrying heavier packs but will be more comfortable for day walks. Their greater flexibility allows a more natural walking motion and gives greater sensitivity to the surfaces being covered.



The Scarpa Trek is a full-grain leather, heavier-duty boot.

Ankle height

I measured the height of one size-41 boot, from the highest part of the upper to the top of the sole. Taller boots that cover the malleoli (the ankle bones on the inside and outside of the foot) give greater ankle support and have a higher water-entry line but are generally heavier.

Sole rubber

After examining the boots, I noted whether the rubber was hard, medium or soft. Amongst the models listed in the table, lighter boots designed for day walking with light loads tended to have softer soles while heavier, stiffer boots generally had harder, more durable rubber. Hard rubber has less shock absorption properties and allows less feedback about the 'feel' of the terrain, but better masks sharp, uncomfortable objects and lasts longer.

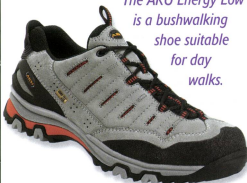
Upper material

Leather is the most common material used for boot uppers. Synthetics are also used to decrease weight and increase flexibility and immediate comfort. However, the use of synthetics necessitates extra seams, which can fray over time and are potential water-entry points. Leather can be split leather (suede), nubuck or full grain. Suede is the

Buy right

- Short list: consider the most common duration of your bushwalks, and the typical terrain encountered to make a short list of boots most suitable for your needs. Those with highly varied requirements might need to consider buying more than one type of boot as trying to cover all bases with a single pair will result in compromises which could detract from bushwalking enjoyment.
- Try before you buy: this is the single most important piece of advice. Specialist retailers have trained staff with a wealth of field experience. They will usually provide the best advice regarding fit and can help you to fine-tune your short list. Better retailers will also encourage customers to try the boots on stairs or a ramp, with and without a loaded pack.
- How waterproof? It's easy to fall into the trap of paying a premium for a breathable, waterproof liner that may not be needed. While certainly waterproof, the extra heat that these liners retain can cause problems of their own, especially in hot and humid climates.
- Allow plenty of time: boots, particularly stiff leather models, should be broken in before they are used on multiday treks. This will take time: it's not a good idea to rush out and buy new boots the day before beginning the Overland Track.

The AKU Energy Low is a bushwalking shoe suitable for day walks.



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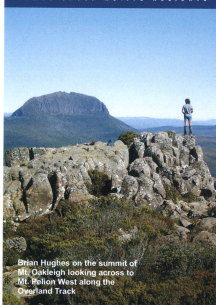
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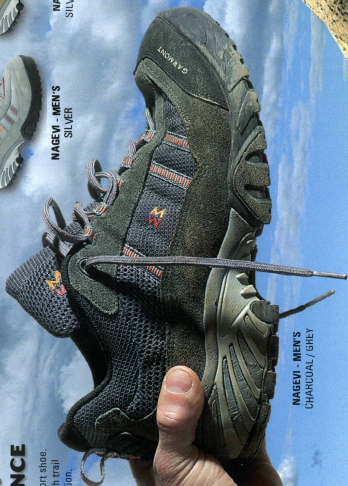
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least durable and waterproof of these types and is more common in low to midpriced boots. Nubuck and full-grain leather are both very waterproof naturally but are often treated or lined with breathable waterproof fabrics to enhance their water resistance. In my experience nubuck tends to hide cuts and scuffs better than full-grain leather due to its slightly sanded texture. Some boots have a

restricting; however, the extra stiffness is appreciated when negotiating rough terrain and this restriction is not as noticeable when laden with a typical multiday pack.

Water resistance

The rating for water resistance is subjective as I was unable to test boots for water penetration. In practice, I've found that wet feet are inevitable in persistently inclement weather as water enters through the top of the boots. In order to rate how well each boot could be expected to prevent water seeping through the upper I considered the materials used in the construction (30 per cent), along with the placement and number of seams (30 per cent). The height of the boots made up the other 40 per cent of the ratings as taller boots, especially those with tongue webbing that extends all the way to the top of the

over time compared to its cost. Boots with a high durability rating fared best (75 per cent), whilst a cost comparison (25 per cent) enabled a final rating to be achieved. Buyers should carefully consider the planned frequency, location and type of use before making a final choice. For instance, occasional day walkers who place lower demands on their footwear may be better served with one of the midprice models that have only scored an average rating for value.

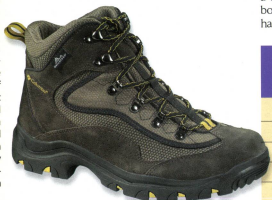
Waterproofness

As mentioned, a boot can only be made resistant to water entry from the sole and upper since water entry from the top cannot be prevented. The purpose of this box is to examine the relative merits and pitfalls of waterproofing measures employed by boot manufacturers.

Great claims are made for the breathable, waterproof fabrics that have revolutionised the performance of products from sleeping bags to coats and tents. In footwear this fabric is intended to form a barrier preventing water entry through seams and the upper material and, in most cases, this barrier does its job. However, the lining can be the first part of the boot to wear out as there is a lot of friction against the fabric. Even the most breathable of the waterproof fabrics will not be able to disperse all the sweat from feet trapped in hot boots. In hot and humid conditions waterproof linings can actually be a liability, as their breathability works best in cooler climates. Some manufacturers offer their high-end models with and without the waterproof lining.

Seams are potential water-entry points so should be kept to a minimum, with one-piece leather construction available in some top-shelf models. Nubuck and full grain are the leathers of choice as they are more naturally waterproof and have greater durability than split leather. Leather uppers are more breathable without waterproof linings, although this can be negated considerably by the waxy coatings applied to make boots more waterproof. However, in hot climates waxy coatings can be left off, while linings can't be removed.

Tall boots are useful in regions where there are often puddles on the ground or mud to sink into. I have really appreciated my high-sided boots in Tasmania and the South Island of New Zealand. The tongue should include side webbing extending right to the top eyelet for maximum waterproofness.



An example of a combination boot, the Columbia Bonanza Peak also has a waterproof lining.

boot, will be less prone to water entry when water pools on the track. Waterproof linings do keep water out but can also keep sweat in, no matter how breathable manufacturers claim the boots are. In hot or humid weather they are a liability. Waterproof linings also rarely last for the life of a boot.

Durability

The durability rating is subjective too, based on experience with a number of different brands and styles in bushwalking conditions. I have had my most positive results with heavy, rigid, leather boots with hard rubber soles. However, such boots won't necessarily be the most suitable for the needs of others. In providing a rating I have considered the hardness and pattern of the sole rubber (25 per cent), the quality and type of the materials used in the upper (25 per cent), the quality of construction (30 per cent), the placement of seams (10 per cent) and the inclusion of protective capping material in high-wear areas such as the toe and heel (10 per cent).

Value

This rating gives readers an indication of how well the boot can be expected to perform

Comments

The lasts on which boots are made vary dramatically, preventing meaningful comparisons of the fit between brands, and even models. A 'wide' fitting in one make may be narrower than another brand's standard: the only way to know is to try them on! Similarly, a women's model may fit your foot better than a men's irrespective of your gender. Some boots are available in a women's model that has a different name to its male counterpart.

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
ACG	Escape	(03) 9844 1224
Armond	Intertrek	(02) 9476 0672
Blundstone	Blundstone	(03) 6271 2222
Five.Ten	Spelean	(02) 9966 9800
Land Rover	Phoenix Leisure Group	(02) 9667 0899
Meindl	Stager Sports	64 3 448 8844
Montrail	www.montrail.com	
The North Face	True Alliance	(02) 8306 3300
Outdoor Expedition	Rays Outdoors	(03) 5278 7633
Pearl Izumi	ZSports	(07) 3219 3411
Redback	Redback Boot Company	(02) 9318 1311
Teva	True Alliance	
3 Peaks	3 Peaks	(03) 9416 9000
Wild Country	Rays Outdoors	
Zamberlan	Beretta Australia	(03) 9799 4999

Price

The price provided in the table is a recommended retail price sourced from distributors or manufacturers and verified in retail outlets. 📌

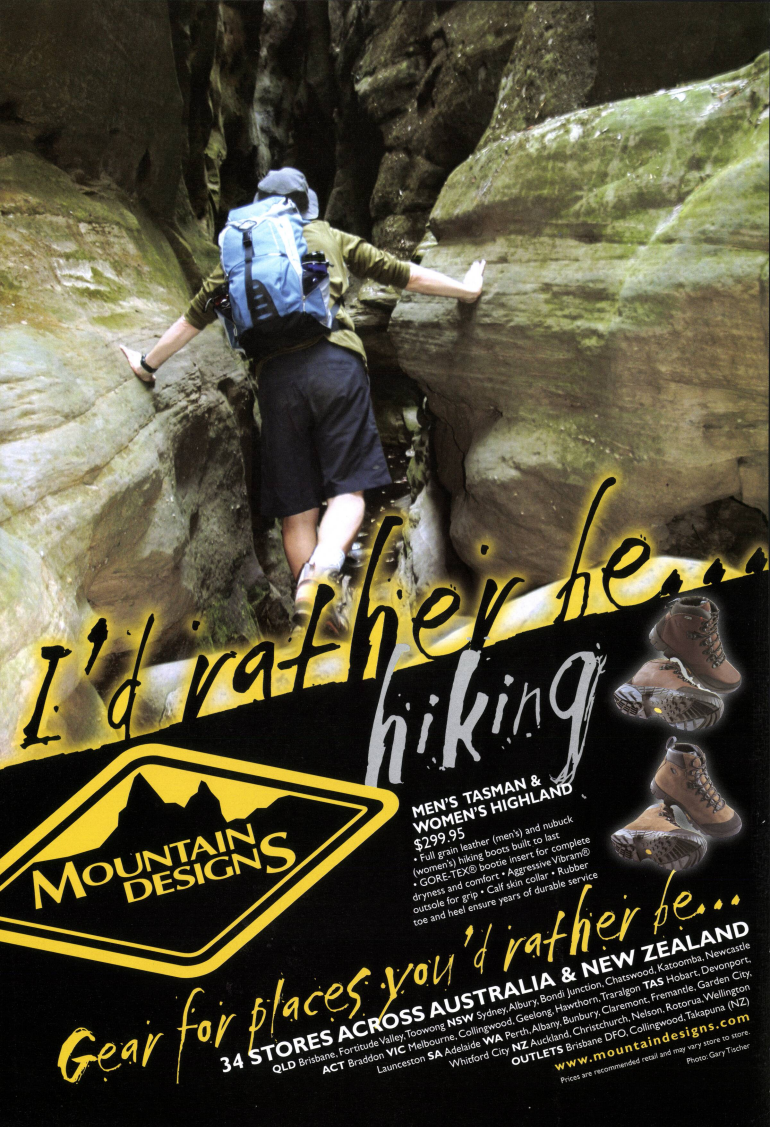
Jim Graham frequently gets to field test and compare a range of products through his roles as an outdoors educator and Duke of Edinburgh Award Coordinator. Bushwalking remains his passion. The New Zealand wilderness is his favourite classroom.

This survey was refereed by Sean Wood.

combination of suede and nubuck, giving extra durability in the high-wear regions whilst keeping weight and cost low.

Flexibility

I rated the stiffness of the boots as high, medium or low after testing both the linear and torsional rigidity with a simple flex test. Generally, the heavier the boot the stiffer its construction. Manufacturers often add extra stiffness by incorporating semi-rigid devices into the mid-sole of some models, allowing the stiffness to be precisely controlled. Walking with light loads in rigid boots can feel



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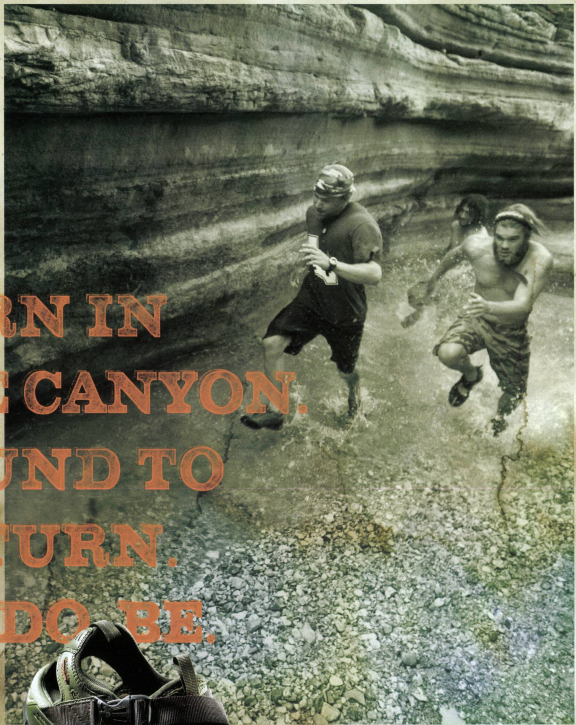
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Getting back to base layers

Andrew Renfree looks at thermal tops

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

(See box on page 55.)

THERE HAS BEEN A LONG-RUNNING TREND (perhaps caused by a fear of becoming lost in remote areas?) for thermal underwear to be produced in eye-catching colours more suited to a 'Where's Wally' poster or a Wiggles concert than wild places. On any given Sunday, the average mountain hut must chuckle as hordes of walkers or skiers peel off their shells to reveal technicolour polypropylene in all its glory. In recent times there have been major advances in the thermal underwear market that have led to the overhaul of technical features, fabrics and style. The introduction of ultra-fine merino wool has changed the state of the average underarm, while the refinement of the standard thermal top has allowed people to tailor their wardrobe to suit their active endeavours better.

With the multitude of styles available in your favourite outdoors shop, the focus should be on what your thermals will be used for, not entirely on how you will look at the cafe at the end of the day.

The primary role of thermal underwear is to provide a base layer within a layering system to facilitate body temperature regulation. This layer should actively transport moisture away from the skin and disperse it to the air or outer layers to be evaporated (commonly known as wicking). Water and perspiration are excellent conductors of heat, so damp underwear has the potential to draw precious heat away from the body. Contemporary materials use weave patterns and thread technology to improve a material's wicking ability. In adventure sports or tropical regions, the main purpose of thermal underwear is to wick moisture away, and the garments are generally looser fitting. For rucksack sports—and hence this survey—thermal layers are expected to provide both warmth and wicking, so thermal cap-

ability is also vital. Your thermal should create layers of air both within the fibres and between clothing layers to trap warm air close to the body.

Fabric

Fabric type, weave, weight and fit all influence a garment's thermal capacity. Materials can be synthetic, such as polypropylene or polyester, or made



The obligatory socks and thermal drying session in Tasmania. Glen Turvey. Right, the Macpac Mountain Versatile is a two-layer garment that uses both natural and synthetic fabrics.



Thermals tops

	Fabric make	Fabric type	Fabric features	Styles	Comments	Agency price, \$
Berghaus China www.berghaus.com †						
Tech T	Tech T	100% polyester		Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS in C; men's available in LS Z	Flat-locked seams; raglan sleeves	50
X-Static	Polartec Powderdry with X-Static	97% polyester, 3% nylon with silver coating	Silver is permanently bonded to the fibres of the garment to neutralise odour-causing bacteria	Men's and women's cuts; LS, Z	Flat-locked seams; very soft feel	90*
Columbia Sportswear China www.columbia.com.au ††						
Odyssey	na	65% soft-spun polyester and 35% microfilament polyester	'EC2 Quick-Dri Process' said to enhance moisture management and thermal regulation; antimicrobial	Men's and women's cuts; children's garments available; LS, C, Z, LJ	Radial-cut sleeves; two weights available	40
Gondwana China www.gondwanaoutdoor.com.au †						
Drycore	Drycore	94% polyester, 6% spandex	Stretch; antibacterial treatment	Men's and women's cuts; LS, C, LJ	Antibacterial treatment said to last for around 20 washes	40-45
Icebreaker New Zealand www.icebreaker.com						
Skin 200	na	Merino wool	200 gsm fabric	Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS, C, Z	Lighter-weight thermal for regular use; raglan sleeves; seamless armpit; side gusset	90
Bodyfit 260	na	As above	260 gsm fabric	As above	Mid- to winter-weight fabric; raglan sleeves	120
Superfine	na	As above	190 gsm fabric	As above	Summer-weight or travel thermal	150
Intertek New Zealand ††						
Premium weight	na	New Zealand polypropylene		Unisex; LS, SS, C	Lightweight fabric	40
Winter weight	na	As above		As above	Winter-weight fabric	70
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au						
Polypro	na	Polypropylene		Unisex; LS, C, SS V, T, Z		40
Thermaplus	Alitica Thermaplus	Polypropylene		Men's and women's cuts; LS V, SS C, LJ		60*
Merino	KMD Merino	Merino wool	19.5 micron thread diameter (maximum)	Men's and women's cuts; LS, S, SS, C	Flat-locked seams	130
Lowie Alpine Germany/Poland www.lowiealpine.com						
DRYflo	DRYflo	100% polyester	Dual-fibre knit with thicker knit next to skin and thinner knit away from skin to wick moisture; Healthguard antibacterial treatment can be replenished with an aerosol	Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS, C, Z, B	Flat-locked seams; light- and heavy-weight fabrics available	60
Dry Zone	DryZone	94% nylon, 6% elastane	To facilitate quicker drying a more open knit with raised pattern is used in areas where most heat and sweat are generated	Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS, C, B	No seams between changes in fabric knit but still seams at the sleeves; very stretchy	100
Macpac China www.macpac.co.nz						
Mountain Versatile	Interwool Light	73% polyester, 20% merino, 7% nylon	Stretch; two-layer fabric with merino against skin to absorb sweat, synthetic on outside for wicking ability	Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS, C, B	Flat-locked seams; thumb loop; can be used as base or outer layer	130

from natural fibres such as wool. The weave refers to the make-up of a fabric at the knit level. The thickness of a material is known as the weight, with manufacturers commonly labelling fabrics as light, medium or heavy, or summer and winter weight. Lightweight fabrics typically suit high-activity aerobic sports or warmer conditions where sweat dispersal is paramount. Midweight underwear provides moisture control and insulation for stop-and-go activities such as skiing and bushwalking. Heavyweight layers are best for very cold conditions or situations when you're relatively inactive, such as mornings and evenings around camp.

Fabric types include synthetics such as polypropylene or polyester, natural products such as wool and silk, and blended fabrics that use combinations of these to utilise the strengths of both. Polypropylene is a synthetic plastic polymer of propylene renowned for its strength and durability, as well as its wicking capabilities. Wearing this near fires and cookers can be dangerous as it burns and

melts easily. Polypropylene is also known for its ability to get stinky, which can be a real problem in the tight confines of a tent. Both polypropylene and polyester garments are considerably cheaper than their natural counterparts and dry quicker than natural fibres. These factors, combined with the ease of care and toughness of the fabrics, have made synthetic garments popular as base layers. Microfilament polyester is a super-fine engineered yarn, while soft-spun polyester has a finer weave; both aim to produce softer end materials.

Merino is much finer than traditional wool and technically more complex than synthetics. The fibres have tiny, overlapping scales around the exterior which are hydrophobic (expel water) while the fibre's core is highly absorbent (hydrophilic). This gives the fabric the ability to absorb and release water without feeling clammy. Merino wool

The Berghaus X-Static top.



Thermals tops continued

Fabric make	Fabric type	Fabric features	Styles	Comments	Approx. price, \$	
Mont Adventure Equipment China www.mont.com.au						
Silux Polo	Polartec Powerstretch	Polyester blend	Four-way stretch fleece; durable nylon outer layer is wind and abrasion resistant while soft, inner polyester layer pulls moisture away from skin	Men's and women's cuts; LS; women's H; LJ	Heavyweight thermal for cold weather or multisport activities	150*
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com.au						
Premium Unisex	na	New Zealand polypropylene		Unisex; children's garments available; LS, SS, T; C, Z; LJ	Raglan sleeves available	35
Deluxe	na	New Zealand polyester	Spun polyester; pique-knit outer surface**	Men's and women's cuts; LS; C, Z, LJ	As above	60
Naturals		Merino wool	280 gsm fabric; 19.5 micron thread diameter	Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS, T; C, Z	Flat-locked seams; raglan sleeves	90
Pallin China www.paddypallin.com.au						
Pallin Tech Tops	Polartec Powerdry	Polyester		Men's and women's cuts; LS; C, Z, LJ	Flat-locked seams, raglan sleeves	65
Sherpa China www.sherpa.com.au						
Polypropylene	na	Polypropylene		Unisex; LS, SS; C, LJ		35
Merinos	na	Australian merino wool	Superfine 18.5 micron thread diameter	As above		70
Silkbody New Zealand www.silkbody.co.nz †						
Cellular	Cellular	80% silk, 20% merino wool	130 gsm fabric; 11–12 micron thread diameter; waffle knit for extra warmth and wicking	Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS, T; C	High silk content gives soft feel; warmer than Silkspun	130
Silkspun	Silkspun	72% silk, 15% cotton, 13% wool	125 gsm fabric; 11–12 micron thread diameter	Men's and women's cuts; LS, S, Sk, SS, T; C	High silk content gives soft feel; fine New Zealand and Australian wool (19 micron); well suited to warmer climates	130
Snowgum China www.snowgum.com.au						
Thermalbod	na	Polypropylene		Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS; C, LJ	Raglan sleeves available	40
Wild Country China www.raysoutdoors.com.au †						
Thermal Underwear	na	Polypropylene		Unisex; LS; C, LJ	Lightweight version available	35
Thermal Underwear	na	Polyester	Midweight thermal made from 90% polyester, 10% spandex; lightweight from 100% polyester	As above		40
Merino	na	Merino wool		Unisex; LS; C, Z, LJ		70
Wilderness Wear Australia www.wildernesswear.com.au						
Polypropylene	na	European polypropylene	190 gsm fabric; double jersey knit; 75 mm staple fibre length	Men's and women's cuts; children's garments available; LS, S, Sk, SS; C, LJ	Raglan sleeves; double stitched flat seams; gusset panel in men's long johns	50
Light Merino T	na	Australian merino wool	170 gsm fabric; 18.5 micron thread diameter; single jersey knit; 75 mm staple fibre length	Men's and women's cuts; LS, SS, T; C, LJ	As above	80
Pure Merino T	na	As above	230 gsm fabric; 18.5 micron thread diameter; double jersey knit; 75 mm staple fibre length	As above	As above	90
Fabric features: gsm grams per square metre Styles: B boxers, briefs or bras, Crew neck, Hoody, LJ long johns, LS long-sleeved top, Singlet, Skivvy, SS short-sleeved top, Tank top (T-shirt without sleeves), V-neck, Zip RRP where possible the cost is for a long-sleeved, crew-neck shirt. The RRP for those marked with * is for a long-sleeved zip or V-neck style, whichever is available ** knitting method creating a fine-textured surface that appears similar to a waffle weave na not applicable † not seen by surveyor ‡ not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made						

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naturally resists odours and has fire retardant properties. However, cost can be a factor. While all these products keep you warm if you get wet and wick moisture from your skin, merino wool garments will be marginally heavier, particularly when they are wet, and will take longer to dry. It is worth noting that some people are allergic to wool when worn against the skin.

Silk is a natural fibre that feels very soft against the skin as it has a very smooth surface and is extremely fine. Silk works well in warm and cool climates in a similar way to merino, with its softness and natural fibre advantages its point of difference. It works better than synthetics in the heat.

Fabric features

Advances in thread design and weave technology are being influenced by biomimicry techniques where the make-up of threads mimics animal fur. Different weave technology also provides more efficient dispersal

of moisture with dual-layer knits. These fabrics can be thought of as two layers; the layer next to the skin is thicker and acts like a sponge to get as much moisture as possible into the fabric, while the outer layer has thinner fibres, creating a greater surface area to encourage evaporation. Other manufacturers use weave technology to incorporate patterns into the fabric that are designed to allow air in and around the layers to facilitate evaporation. Often called a waffle knit, some areas of the garment look as if they have been pushed in while the remaining areas are raised. Antibacterial and antimicrobial treatments are another feature to look at. These treatments are designed to stop bacteria, organisms and nasties responsible for that hideous smell when you remove your thermals at the end of a long week in the field. Bacteria is one part of the smelly process, so antibacterial treatments by themselves do not necessarily eradicate odours. Treatments range from those that can be applied in a spray or the

Buy right

- Matching your thermal to its prospective use is the primary concern. For those heading to the hills, thermal capability and wicking is key. Choose a close fit and a weight suitable for the expected temperatures. Select a heavy weight for snow, and a lightweight model for summer walking. For activities such as skiing, with lots of stopping and starting, ventilation is vital so zips are useful.
- A couple of thermals are good to mix and match to suit conditions. A lightweight thermal that can be worn with a heavier thermal over the top is a good choice for travellers or those experiencing warm days and cool nights such as in alpine or desert regions. If you are going to be in close quarters and you are concerned about smell, merino wool might be the answer. However, if budget and longevity are a priority, polypropylene is a good place to start.

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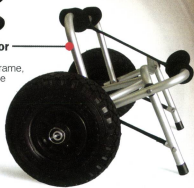
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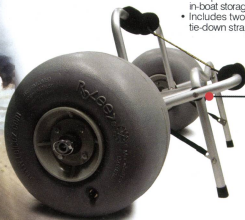
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wash to pure silver that is permanently bonded to the fibres microscopically. However, they can have harmful impacts on the environment—it might be worth checking with retailers or the manufacturer. Spray-on and wash-in treatments do not last for ever: ask advice from retail staff if this is an important factor.

Fabric weight is typically measured in grams per square metre (gsm): the higher the number, the denser the material knit. This does not necessarily translate into a warmer garment, but provides a good guide. Fibre diameter is measured in microns; typically the thinner the fibres the smoother the fabric. This is important for those whose skin is easily irritated. Silk comes in at around 11–12 microns, with the merino in the survey from 18 to 20 microns.

Styles

One of the most important factors is the fit of a garment. Closer-fitting items provide better insulation and entrapment of warm air, but if clothing is too tight, blood flow can be restricted, reducing the garment's efficiency. Most manufacturers provide men's and women's cuts to accommodate differences between the sexes. From here variations include V-neck, crew neck, skivvy and zip neck. Small pockets are sometimes



The Silkbody Silkspun is made from a combination of silk, cotton and wool.

provided in tops or long johns for car keys or spare change and can be very useful when the wallet is deep in the pack in the car's boot and a pastry is a must for the trip home! Some long-sleeved tops have thumb holes, which can be very handy for keeping the sleeves down where they should be and the backs of your hands warm.

Other considerations

As the base layer is closest to your skin, comfort should be carefully considered. Irritation

due to materials or rough seams can be annoying distractions from your wilderness experience. The placement of seams is important, with seamless or flat-locked seam garments less irritating under a pack harness. Raglan sleeves are good for carrying a pack as the seams go diagonally from the neck to the armpit rather than straight along the top of the shoulder.

Manufacturing considerations include the quality of construction as well as the country of manufacture.

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Adventure-line	M B Wrapp	(03) 9310 4696
Climatec	Reflex Sports	(02) 4872 1242
Helly Hansen	Blue Rock	(03) 9338 5326
Karrimor		www.karrimor.com
Lafuma	Adventure Extreme	(02) 4966 1377
Marmot	LA Imports	(02) 9913 7155
Merino-country	Merino Country	(07) 3369 8366
Millet	Adventure Extreme	
Mountain River Sea	Leisure Sports	(02) 8976 9500
Netti	Roman	(02) 9516 5150
Norsewear		www.norsewear.co.nz
Pearl Izumi	Zsports	(07) 3219 3411
Peter Storm		www.peterstorm.com
Sportz Trek	M B Wrapp	
Swannndri		www.swannndri.co.nz
The North Face	True Alliance	(02) 8306 3352
3 Peaks	3 Peaks	(03) 9416 9000
Weft	Ansoo	(03) 9471 1500
XTM	XTM	(03) 5261 6948

Styles include T-shirts, long-sleeved tops, singlets, tank tops, long johns, short johns (boxer shorts), bras, underpants and now even G-strings. Long-sleeved shirts are the staple of the layering system in colder environments while T-shirts or singlets are useful for more temperate climates. Thermal garments can be very useful for travelling and a well-styled item can be used as a base layer under other clothes or as an everyday top on its own.

Having grown up skiing and walking around Gippsland, Andrew Renfree now works in outdoor education. His interests shift between walking and climbing in western Victoria, skiing anywhere and the odd mountaineering trip. He's presently working on growing a belay partner from scratch.

The survey was refereed by John Wilde.

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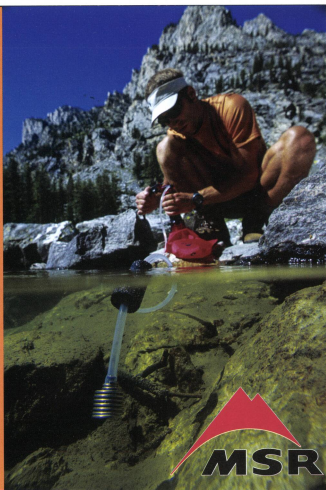
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No more gaffer?

Pack maker **Explore Planet Earth** is doing its best to put the manufacturers of gaffer tape out of business—its new **pack**, the **Polaris**, is made from a remarkable 'self-repairing fabric'. Apparently the fabric used in the Polaris packs, DuPont Cordura Silicone Rip-Stop, 'can be stretched and smoothed over small tears and punctures', allowing you to be back on the track in minutes. The space-age Polaris comes in two different sizes, a 40 litre day bag and a larger 60 litre version for multiday walking. Both come with standard features—dual compartments, compression straps and hydration ports—and weigh only 1.25 kilograms and 1.7 kilograms each. Next out from Explore Planet Earth—a pack that goes bushwalking without you. Explore Planet Earth can be contacted on (02) 8338 6999. RRP for the packs \$149 and \$169, respectively.



The Explore Planet Earth Polaris, a star healer.

Kathmandu also has a new pack on the market, the **Vanguard Rucksack v4**. Designed for mountaineering and bushwalking, this single-compartment pack comes with the new Configure3 harness. The pack comes in three different sizes and features three different sized, interchangeable hip-belts and shoulder pads—allowing 27 different fit combinations—a number sure to confuse not only the customers but also the salespeople, poor dears. A fully featured pack, size one is 55 litres in volume and weighs 2.1 kilograms, size two is 60 litres and 2.18 kilograms and size three is 65 litres and 2.26 kilograms. RRP \$429.90, \$449.90 and \$469.90, respectively. For more information see www.kathmandu.com.au.

Bugs and bioterrorism

How'd you like a dose of anthrax to ruin your next adventure? Or cryptosporidium? Draw your own line in the sand against bugs and bioterrorism with the new **SteriPEN Adventurer water filter**. At 110 grams—around half the weight of its predecessor (see *Wild* no 99)—the Adventurer will dispose of 99.9 per cent (in varying degrees of decimal places) of bacteria, protozoa and viruses. To purify one litre of water the business end of the unit needs to be immersed for 90 seconds then stirred (but not shaken), to achieve uniform purification. That's 90 seconds well-spent to avoid bird flu, giardia, *E. coli*, salmonella or smallpox, among other charming water-borne microbes. Chemicals and pumping aren't needed and you'll avoid days spent incapacitated by loss of liquid from both ends. There are automatic green and red sensor lights that indicate when the water is safe, auto-

matically adjusting processing time to accommodate for temperature variation. The unit comes with two rechargeable camera batteries (CR123) and a rugged, rubberised body.

Of particular interest to long-range walkers and expeditioners is the **Solar Recharger** (available separately), a carrying case with an integrated solar panel. The case can also be recharged by plugging it into a vehicle's cigarette lighter. The SteriPEN Adventurer and Solar Recharger are distributed by **Sea to Summit**; contact them on (08) 9221 6617. RRP \$319.95 and \$124.95, respectively.

Despite appearances, the SteriPEN is not a probe, it's a water saviour.



No snag sleeping bag

A new addition to the ultra-light kit range is the **Western Mountaineering Summer-Lite sleeping bag**. Filled with 275 grams of 850+ loft down, and rated down to 0°C, the bag weighs in at a massive 525 grams. Although not weighing much, it's no lightweight in the features department, with continuous baffles that allow the down to be shifted from the top to the bottom as conditions demand. It also has a full-length zip, which apparently utilises a 'super effective anti snag feature'—so hopefully no more struggling in the dark with jammed zips. Finally, the bag is made from Extremelite

fabric, which is not only ultra-light, but durable, downproof and comes with a DWR treatment. What more could you want? Western Mountaineering bags are distributed by **Paddymade Sales**, contact them on (02) 8799 2416. RRP \$649.

KNICK-KNACKS

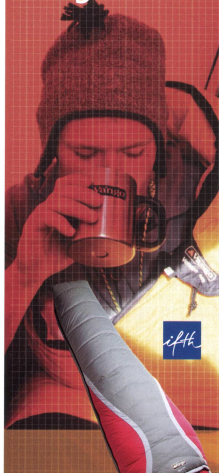
Tropic topics

Hot and humid weather and stagnant water normally mean mozzies! After you have purified the murky water, your travelling troubles aren't over: there's Ross River, dengue fever and malaria to avoid. Keep the disease-ridden insects at bay with the Mosquito Headnet from Sea to Summit. The plain mesh is easy to see through, so you won't miss the dodo, should it reappear. It's long enough to tuck into collars and has a drawcord to keep the blighters out. They also come in 'World Health Organisation' approved, Permethrin-treated versions for the particularly belligerent and genetically modified species. RRP for the plain mesh version is \$9.95, \$14.95 for the treated version.

SummerLite: the name says it all.



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 heart **beating**
 pulse racing, a race against time
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- Premium quality 600+ fill power down
- Fill weight 750 grams
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- Two-way YKK auto-lock zip
- Four-way compression sack
- 1600 grams total weight
- All for as little as \$369

*IFTH (Institut Français Textile - Habillement)



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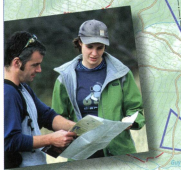
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Blinded by the light?

Suitable sunglasses for the mountains can be hard to find, and snow blindness is apparently not as much fun as you would expect. Solving this problem is the new Explorer model sunglasses from Julbo. Designed in

conjunction with those masters of style, the French National School of Alpinism, the Explorer features 'a wrap-around frame, removable side shields, and an adjustable cord'. You can also choose between three different lens types; the Alt-Spectron, Cameleon (which is both photochromatic and polarised) and a glass lens version. For more technical data, visit www.julbo.com Mont Adventure Equipment distribute the glasses; phone (02) 6162 0900. RRP for the Explorer is \$179 with the Alt-Spectron lens and \$299 with the Cameleon lens.

Peg wars

How many times have you bent a peg trying to push it into the rock-hard Australian earth? Camping grounds everywhere are littered with the corpses of bent pegs. But



The Julbo Explorer sunglasses.

TRIX

Leech repellent

Stephen Bunton gives us the word on keeping those pesky bloodsuckers at bay

Too often I hear of people reaching for salt or matches to remove a leech. I've never bothered, I just flick or rip them off when I see them. However, once when I was overwhelmed by their numbers I had to consider more serious measures. This was on a trip to Nepal when we ventured into a particularly overgrown and leech-ridden area. After our previous day's experience, our sirdar instructed us to rub some chewing tobacco around our ankles in the morning. The contrast was amazing—it worked brilliantly!

Unfortunately, chewing tobacco is not sold in Australia. But you can make up a similar concoction using cheap pot and tobacco. Anything that makes a nice, juicy smear on your legs will do and it should last all day. This mix needs some preparation and a dedicated container, so you will need to anticipate your next venture into serious leech country.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

that was before the advent of the inspiringly named Easton 200 millimetre Tent Stake, a peg that will make all other pegs 'feel like sticks of tinfoil'. For all you alloy freaks out there this peg is made from .340 inch 7075-E9 hard-anodised gold-finished aluminium, giving the pegs an impressive tensile strength of 96 000 psi—whatever that means. Retailing at an equally impressive \$7.90 a peg, they are distributed by Anasco. Call (03) 9471 1500.

Maps for the 21st century

Map nerds of the world are celebrating the arrival of Memory-Map: Topo, navigation software that is easily used on a PC, Pocket PC or WM Smartphone. Using this new software you can plan your intended bushwalk and then print out a map of it. Connect it to a GPS and it will show your position on a colour map and help you to navigate more easily. Not only that, when you get home the 'performance review' features let you see exactly where you've travelled, the distance covered and the speeds'. The RRP for Memory-Map: Topo is \$299.95. Distributed by Memory-Map and Ampiro, Topo can be bought online at www.memory-map.com.au or from selected map and outdoors shops. For more information, see the Reviews department in this issue.

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD or by email), are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: editorialadmin@wild.com.au

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THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Landmark win for wildlife

Margaret Blakers gives a summary of Bob Brown's recent court victory over Forestry Tasmania



Above and right, Wielangta Forest's coupe 19D, the subject of Senator Brown's court case. Rob Blakers. **Bottom**, the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle. Dave Watts

The Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle, the swift parrot and the Wielangta stag beetle are safe from logging in Tasmania's Wielangta Forest (unless the Federal Environment Minister decides otherwise!). That's the stunning outcome of Senator Brown's Federal Court case against Forestry Tasmania, delivered to a packed courtroom in Hobart on 19 December 2006.

When the case was launched Ian Macdonald, former Federal Minister for Forestry & Conservation, called it 'a stunt'. Some stunt! Justice Shane Marshall found that logging in Wielangta was unlawful because the beetle, eagle and parrot were all likely to be significantly impacted and it lacked approval from the Federal Environment Minister.

Justice Marshall's judgment is beautifully written and closely argued. It says that 'protect' means really protect; that the aim of conservation is to recover endangered species, not leave them clinging on the brink of extinction; and that when assessing the impacts

of an action, all impacts—direct, indirect and cumulative—need to be looked at. His decision shows Tasmania's forest management system to be deeply flawed and all its key agencies to have failed. Several of Forestry Tasmania's witnesses are severely criticised for lack of independence or manipulation of evidence. The Commonwealth Government is shown to have failed to prepare recovery plans for threatened species and to have failed to protect the beetle, eagle and parrot through the five-year review of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA), completed in 2002. (For more information and a link to the judgment, see www.on-trial.info)

The context of the Wielangta case is a global extinction crisis, the sixth in the world's history but the first driven by human activity. The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* implements Australia's obligations under the international Biodiversity Convention. But logging was given a priv-



ileged status, exempted from having to gain EPBC Act approval provided it was in accordance with a RFA. The result was clear-felling on a grand scale, massively increased woodchipping and destruction of old-growth forests and wildlife habitat in Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia.

In 2003 Brown began to explore legal options to protect endangered species. The Wielangta Forest, about 10 000 hectares of land on Tasmania's east coast near Hobart, is an ice-age refugium, home to many endemic and threatened species. Tall wet forests, rainforest gullies and dry forests intergrade over short distances, changing with elevation and aspect. Parts have never been logged—or only lightly, selectively logged—leaving expanses of old-growth forest. Swift parrot expert Peter Brown, giving evidence for Senator Brown, described one hill of ancient, hollow-rich trees as the 'finest swift parrot breeding habitat' he had ever seen.

The Wielangta stag beetle is confined to the area, except for a small, genetically distinct population on nearby Maria Island. It is ancient, slow moving and flightless, and has been munching wood on the forest floor for 200 million years. At the other end of the food chain, the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle ranges widely but nests only in large expanses of undisturbed tall forest and, unlike its mainland cousin, is very sensitive to disturbance during the breeding season. The swift parrot migrates to Tasmania in the breeding season, nesting in loose colonies in old-growth forest near flowering blue gums. The beetle, the eagle and the parrot are all categorised as 'endangered'—at imminent risk of extinction in the wild.

Senator Brown launched his case against Forestry Tasmania on 30 May 2005. He alleged that the logging in Wielangta was likely to have a significant impact on each of the three species and was therefore not in accordance with the RFA. After 33 days of hearings, site inspections, 37 witnesses and thousands of pages of evidence, Justice Marshall agreed. He ordered the logging to stop and Forestry Tasmania to pay costs. (Both decisions may be appealed.)

The implications of the Wielangta judgment are huge. If they flow through to action, Australia's capacity to protect threatened species will be greatly strengthened. In early reactions *The Australian* reported that Federal Minister for Forestry & Conservation Eric Abetz and Environment Minister Ian Campbell were unsure if logging was legal, and Forestry Tasmania declined to confirm its legality. By the time you read this, Forestry Tasmania may have appealed or the Federal Government may have moved to change the law. Either action will clearly imply that they regard old-growth logging as more important than the survival of species.

When he announced the Tasmanian RFA in 1997, Howard insisted that it was legally binding and that it delivered 'outstanding world-class conservation outcomes'. If the government sticks to these commitments, and upholds the law in accordance with the Wielangta decision, the future for Australia's unique plants and animals will be a lot brighter.

Australia's heritage betrayed

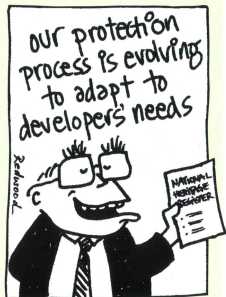
Geoff Mosley outlines recent changes to heritage legislation

The queue of places waiting for heritage assessment is a catalogue of some of the nation's most outstanding areas including the wonderfully diverse forests and heaths of south-west WA, the Alps and south-east forests, the Australian Antarctic Territory, the Great Ocean Road, and the art treasures of WA's Burrup Peninsula. However, the protection of Australia's national and world heritage is in deep trouble as the Federal Government is blocking meaningful progress. Its priorities are clearly elsewhere. The latest evidence of this is the Environment & Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill, which passed through the Senate in late 2006. Described as 'a bill to streamline the process of heritage assessment', it is regarded by environmentalists as yet another way of avoiding the job that should be done.

The government now intends to restrict assessment of new nominations for the National Heritage list to a particular theme, announced annually. (There has always been provision for the Federal Environment Minister to announce guiding themes, but he chose not to use it.) In December and January Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell announced the addition of a number of national parks (Warrumbungle, Royal, Ku-ring-gai Chase, the Grampians and Stirling) and two fossil sites to the National Heritage list. At the same time he revealed his long-term plan, saying, 'We expect to build the list up to maximise out at around 200 properties'.

To understand how inadequate this is and how the obstacles to progress have been developed, one needs to go back to the Whitlam Government's appointment of the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate and to the passage of the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*. This legislation set up the Register of the National Estate (RNE) (now in the process of being replaced by the National Heritage list). By 2003 around 13 000 nominations for the RNE had been received. The other main strand of heritage protection was the World Heritage Convention, which Australia ratified in 1974.

The first obstruction to World Heritage nominations resulted from Paul Keating's efforts to find a way around the Labor Party's policy of phasing out woodchip exports. Responding to a loggers' blockade of Parliament House, he embraced the idea of RFAs with the states, a course of action warmly embraced by John Howard after the Liberal victory in 1996. In forested



areas World Heritage assessments were now to be carried out under the terms of the RFAs: such assessments have not been finalised.

In 2003 the national heritage protection function was transferred to the provisions of the EPBC Act. The first stage of abandoning the RNE began (with about half the nominations still not assessed) and a new system of heritage protection including National and Commonwealth Heritage lists set up in its stead, the new law starting in January 2004. In effect, the public was asked to start over again. More than 100 nominations had been received by October 2006 but only about one-third had been assessed (mostly smaller sites and long-standing national parks). It was at this stage that the Howard Government introduced the amendments (now law) to streamline the assessment process and do away with the RNE. The end result is increased ministerial control by a government ideologically opposed to National and World Heritage lists that compete with private rights and development in any way.

The scope for this was already strong because the Howard Government had also decided that places must be on the National Heritage list before nomination for the World Heritage list. For places already subject to a RFA this amounts to a triple hurdle. The government's approach is a betrayal of Australians who for four decades have worked hard to build up worthwhile national and world heritage protection systems. The big question is whether Labor would do any better.

Election round-ups and previews

Gavan McFadzean gives a post-mortem on the results of last year's election and its effect on Victoria's forests

The Bracks Government was re-elected in November 2006. The following environmental promises were made after strong campaigning:

- The protection of world-class stands of old-growth forests including Goolenook, and some areas of rainforest and threatened wildlife habitat in East Gippsland. In total this will add almost 36 000 hectares of forest to Victoria's reserve system;
- The addition of an extra 5000 hectares to the Errinundra National Park will create a Great Victorian Alpine National Park linking the Errinundra, Snowy and Alpine National Parks;
- The 27 000 hectare Cobboboonee State Forest, outside Portland in the state's far west, will be added to the Lower Glenelg National Park, protecting the habitat of the spotted-tail quoll, southern brown bandicoot, long-nosed potoroo and powerful owl;
- The government also gave a commitment to create new red gum National Parks if recommended by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council. This should result in the protection of approximately 60 000 hectares of red gum forests along the Murray River and its tributaries.

While this is a great result, large areas of Victoria's old-growth forests and water catchments were not protected. Five of Melbourne's catchments, supplying more than half our water, are still available for log-

ging, with the Bracks Government committed to further research on the impact that this has on water supply. However, with a decade of research already clearly showing that logging reduces water supply by up to 50 per cent, and facing Victoria's worst ever drought, the case is irrefutable. The overwhelming environmental challenge facing us is climate change, and forest protection is a critical part of any climate change action plan. Protecting forests buffers us from dangerous climate change while linking protected forest areas builds resilience in our ecosystems and helps to avoid an extinction crisis in our native animals.

Andrew Cox outlines the policies of the main parties in the lead-up to the NSW election

NSW voters will go to the polls on 24 March and need to consider our wild places. The lemma-led Labor Government, vying for a fourth term after 12 years in office, has an impressive record of new national parks and other environmental initiatives. It has increased the level of national parks from six per cent of NSW to eight per cent, protecting important coastal forests and poorly protected western NSW. It has also created a series of new marine parks and put in place stronger land-clearing rules, but not without loopholes.

In the last year Labor has provoked the ire of environmental groups by winding back 25-year-old environmental planning laws so that major developments no longer require a full environmental assessment. Climate change measures have fallen well short of the major emission reductions required. Recreational shooting is now permitted in state forests across eastern NSW and logging on

private land is still without promised controls. New national parks to protect the iconic red gum forests of the Murray River are not supported by Labor.

The Liberal-National Coalition, led by Peter Debnam, has provided a light environmental platform, with extremely worrying policy positions released by the time of publication. The Coalition is seeking to revoke national parks in the Pilliga area in north-west NSW and the Riverina, permit a trial of recreational hunting in national parks, open up national parks and wilderness areas to horse riding, and rewrite sanctuary zones in favour of fishers in two marine parks.

The Greens and Democrats have clear policies supporting the protection and restoration of the natural environment and have shown strong support for almost all positions advocated by NSW environmental groups.

The recently released NSW State of the Environment Report (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/soe) provides an alarming account of the ongoing decline of most aspects of our natural environment. While there is some positive news, it confirms that natural resources are consumed at a rate 'that is not sustainable' and native vegetation continues to decline in extent and condition.

The challenge for an incoming State Government is huge. Political parties should implement at least 60 per cent cuts to greenhouse gas emissions over the next ten years, create new national parks, such as for the Murray River red gums, rein in land clearing for urban development and uncontrolled logging on private land, and address the growing threat of invasive weeds and feral animals on public and private lands.

Lyndon Schneiders

A brief profile of the 2006 Wild Environmentalist of the Year, by Andrew Wong

Lyndon Schneiders has worked for The Wilderness Society (TWS) since 1993 including as Cape York Campaigner and in his current position as Queensland Campaign Manager. He has led or been central to an impressive number of important conservation victories. Schneiders worked on the campaign for Queensland's south-east forests, which included protecting 425 000 hectares of high conservation-value forests and a phase out of native-forest logging. He made a major contribution to the land-clearing campaign in Queensland, which ended broad-scale tree clearing in up to 18 million hectares across much of the state. He led TWS in its work to remove the sand-mining lease over Shelburne Bay's stunning dune fields and to pro-

tect more than two million hectares of superlative tropical environments along the east coast of Cape York. Schneiders also led the campaign for the creation of the Queensland *Wild Rivers Act*, a first in Australia, following which six wild rivers were given increased protection.

Lyndon Schneiders was awarded a Centenary of Federation award by the Australian Government in 2002 for his 'outstanding commitment to the environment and conservation'. He was the recipient of the prestigious Winston Churchill Fellowship, for which he travelled extensively in Canada to study the developing relationships between environmental groups and indigenous landowners.



Lyndon Schneiders. The Wilderness Society



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Logging in Tasmania

Vica Bayley gives updates on the Upper Florentine and Weld valleys

Campaigns to protect Tasmania's World Heritage-value forests intensified in late 2006 with the occupation of threatened areas of the Upper Florentine Valley. This valley of threatened forests is bordered on three sides by the mountains of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and local, national and international experts have called for it to be added to the World Heritage Area. It provides important habitat for threatened species such as the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle, the spotted-tail quoll and the white goshawk.

In October, campaigners from the Derwent Forest Alliance established a treetop protest blocking construction of a logging road in the Upper Florentine. In November, TWS launched the World Heritage Watchtower, a tree platform set in the canopy of the threatened forests, 55 metres above the ground, from which to bear witness to the actions of Forestry Tasmania in this precious area.

During the federal election campaign in October 2004, the Prime Minister promised 'immediate protection of 18 700 hectares



*A new logging road into the forests of the Upper Florentine Valley would open up hundreds of hectares for logging. While the mountains of the World Heritage Area, such as Mt Mueller in the background, are protected, the forests on the valley floor aren't. Vica Bayley. **Left**, the day after the Weld blockade was busted, 40 people protested a few hundred metres from where the Weld Ark was a day earlier. Three people were arrested for refusing to leave. Laura Minnebo*

of old growth forest in the Styx and Florentine valleys along the Eastern Boundary World Heritage Area'. Despite this promise, logging has recently begun.

In spite of the question mark over its legality caused by the Wielangta court decision, logging of coupe FO42F in the Upper Florentine began just before Christmas. As the Upper Florentine is a known habitat for threatened species, logging there is illegal without specific approval from the Federal Environment Minister. This puts the government in the ironic situation of considering whether specifically to approve the logging of an area they promised to protect.

Since the last report from the Weld Valley (see *Wild* no 103), the community block-

ade that had halted the construction of a proposed logging road for more than 18 months succumbed to a massive, state-sponsored assault. In league with Forestry Tasmania, more than 50 police raided the camp at dawn on 15 November. By the end of the day the camp had been destroyed, including the iconic 'Weld Ark', a life-size replica pirate ship (see *Wild* no 102) that had come to symbolise community opposition to the clear-felling and woodchipping of Tasmania's southern forests. Ben Morrow reports that hundreds of people risked trespass charges to bear witness to the destruction of this public forest.

Twenty-three people were arrested, with three spending time in remand. The day

after the police and machines left, the community reclaimed the forest with two structures being established to block access. No further work had been undertaken by mid-January but logging of coupes adjacent to the new road was expected to start in late January or February. Numerous areas of the Weld directly bordering the World Heritage Area face destruction sometime in 2007.

▲ Act now

For more information about the Weld Valley or to make a donation, visit the Huon Valley Environment Centre's web site at www.huon.org

Tales from the High Roads #11

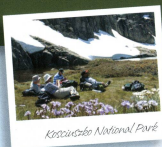


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Northern Australia's rivers under renewed threat

Larissa Cordner reports

The future protection of the wild tropical rivers of northern Australia continues to be the subject of intense debate throughout Australia. In late 2006, high-profile politicians such as Senator Bill Heffernan, Warren Truss, Malcolm Turnbull and Bob Katter called for a so-called 'nation building' project to move large-scale farming and irrigation into northern Australia in response to drought conditions in southern Australia. This followed an announcement by the Commonwealth Government that \$27 million would be made available to investigate the availability of water supplies for agricultural expansion throughout northern Australia from the Kimberley region across to Cape York.

Conservation groups have rejected this idea outright, pointing out the past failures of irrigation schemes in northern Australia and highlighting the extraordinary conservation values that would be lost if irrigation was introduced. In response, they have promoted an alternative future for northern Australia that will see the long-term protection of wild rivers while allowing a range of existing, but less destructive, economic development opportunities.

A prime example of this approach is Queensland's historic Wild Rivers initiative,



The wild Wenlock River, Cape York, Queensland. Kerry Trapnell

through which the Queensland Government is poised to protect a number of major river systems in far north Queensland with funding for up to 100 wild-river rangers. TWS are seeking the protection of a further 13 wild rivers in the Cape York region and

will be campaigning to convince the WA and Northern Territory Governments to also adopt strategies to protect their state's wild rivers. For further information about this topic, visit the TWS web site at www.wilderness.org.au

Woodchips

Work against warming

New figures released in January showed that carbon dioxide is accumulating in the atmosphere much faster than expected. The *Age* reported on 20 January that scientists are worried that this may be caused by climate change affecting the amount of emissions that nature can absorb, resulting in even less time to cut emissions before the worst effects of climate change are felt. This follows on from the Walk Against Warming held across Australia in November, which attracted more than 100,000 people. See Info in this issue.

Green Electricity Watch 2006, an independent ranking of Green Power electricity products offered by Australian electricity retailers, was released in November 2006, aiming to simplify energy decisions. Origin Energy and TRUenergy came out on top; visit www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au to see how they stack up.

Gunns again

TWS reported in December that Gunns was not proceeding with the 'corporate campaigns' claims in the Gunns 20 case, which related to lobbying Japanese customers, the banks and the Banksia Awards. Dropping these claims removed more than \$3.5 million of

the initial \$6.3 million claimed, and discontinued the case against five of the defendants (Greens MPs Bob Brown and Peg Putt, Helen Gee, Peter Pullinger and Doctors for Native Forests). The case against the remaining 15 defendants was due to return to court on 25 January.

Karst land protection

Stephen Bunton reports that the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) has been appointed by the Australian Government's Department of Environment & Heritage (DEH) to administer the \$3.6 million allocated to protect forest on karst land with recognised national conservation values at Mole Creek. The Mole Creek Programme is part of the Tasmanian Forest Conservation Fund, which aims to protect 45,600 hectares of private forested land including up to 2,400 hectares of forest on karst land.

The DEH has written to 400 ratepayers in the Mole Creek Area and received an encouraging response from landowners interested in selling or placing a conservation covenant on their property. Land purchased under this project may be added to the existing reserve system; for example, the Mole Creek Karst National Park or Great Western Tiers Conservation Area, or it may

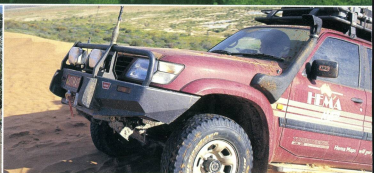
be purchased and managed by the TLC. Covenanted land remains with the existing owners, with a management strategy to protect the sensitive underlying cave systems. It is hoped that the Mole Creek Karst Forest Programme will protect much more of the high conservation value caves and karst in the area, especially those forming part of the iconic underground river which is Mole Creek. For further information, please contact Ruth Osborne at TLC on (03) 6225 1399 or email: rosborne@tasland.org.au.

Bush Heritage

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund has purchased a new property. Scottsdale covers 1328 hectares of the Murrumbidgee River valley, 12 kilometres north of Bredbo in NSW. It is the first property purchased for 'Kosciuszko to the Coast', a new landscape management project that aims to link a network of habitats between the Australian Alps and the coastal ranges to the east. Visit www.bushheritage.org.au for more information. 

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahara, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

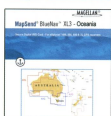
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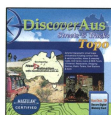
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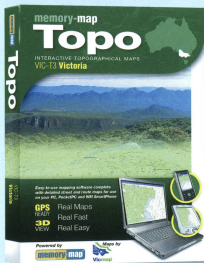
Topo—Interactive Topographical Maps VIC-T3 Victoria DVD

(Vicmap & Geoscience Australia, 2006, RRP \$299.95, www.memory-map.com.au).

This DVD mapping software, easily loaded on to your home PC, is like nothing I've seen before. The map data originates from government mapping, and as you zoom in onscreen, the base data changes from small scale 1:250 000 to larger scale 1:25 000 mapping. Of use to bushwalkers and other outdoors enthusiasts, you can plot the route of your intended walk on the screen and then print out a map at the scale of your choice, potentially saving you from purchasing sheet maps. The program also enables you to create maps with your own data (such as links to external files) added to an overlay. As well, this versatile software is GPS compatible, allowing you to view satellite imagery or plot your position from a Global Positioning System. For a bit of a thrill, plot your walk on the screen and then use the 3-D fly-through mode to have a look at your walk as if you were flying over it in a

helicopter. I've only seen the DVD data for Victoria but many other areas of Australia are covered, as well as a number of overseas destinations. Check out the Memory-Map web site for more information.

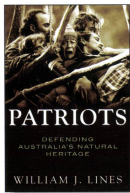
Glenn van der Knijff



Patriots

by William J Lines (University of Queensland Press, 2006, RRP \$34.95, www.uqp.uq.edu.au).

In *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage* William J Lines maps out the 'nation-defining struggle' to defend wildlife and natural beauty over the last 60 years. The development of the conservation movement from small, regional groups to national organisations is followed, with individuals, campaigns and progress tracked. Lines also reflects at length on wilderness philosophy and its challenges, such as maintaining a coherent front despite different agendas, and the need to fight the human urge to 'conquer the wilderness'. However, Lines's disdain for certain parties in the environment movement, especially academics and those concerned with Aboriginal rights, is evident, making the book seem unbalanced in parts. *Patriots* gives a good overview of the Australian conservation movement although it is weighed down in



parts by the author's opinions on wilderness philosophy.

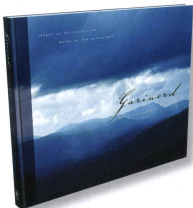
Megan Holbeck

Gariwerd

photos by Alison Pouliot, words by Gib Wettenhall (Em PRESS, 2006, RRP \$75, www.gariwerd.com).

Gariwerd: Reflecting on the Grampians makes an important contribution to our understanding and appreciation of this major mountain landscape in western Victoria. Pouliot's 118 photos are evocative and of very high quality. They are generally of varied and interesting subjects, with an emphasis on close-up detail rather than breathtaking vistas. Commendably, she has resisted the temptation to include clichéd shots of the Jaws of Death, the Pinnacle and other such tourist honey pots. Indeed, there aren't any photos including people or even any sign of the impact of humans on the landscape (with few and minor exceptions).

That Wettenhall has a considerable love and understanding of the Grampians, par-



ticularly their history before European settlement in the region, not to mention natural history and local Aboriginal history, is immediately apparent. I found his text interesting, well written and informative. He documents the devastating impact of European influence on the Aboriginal people and the ignorant commercial exploitation of the landscape for farming, logging, mining, water and tourism. He makes a good case that one result of this exploitation is more damaging bushfires than in Aboriginal times.

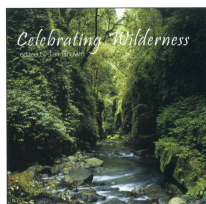
The high production standards of *Gariwerd* are equal to that established by the photographic and written content. If you have an interest in the Grampians, you are likely to want this very fine book.

Chris Baxter

Celebrating Wilderness

edited by Ian Brown (Envirobook, 2006, RRP \$59.90, www.envirobook.com.au).

Just as we are blessed with a wealth of wild places in Australia, we are also saturated with a huge range of pictorial books celebrating our natural heritage. *Celebrating Wilderness* sits comfortably somewhere between the



glossy tourist book and the more scholarly tome written for the earnest conservationist. It contains a combination of beautiful photos depicting various threatened Australian landscapes and an excellent selection of essays and dissertations on the historical and contemporary issues pertaining to the

Australian landscape and our societies relation to, and management of, our priceless natural heritage.

This book would be a great gift for someone whose interest in Australia's natural heritage is only just beginning and who desires an informative and eye-catching read. *Celebrating Wilderness* is well produced and bound in a hard cover.

Eli Greig

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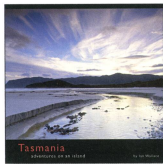
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PREPARED FOR ADVENTURE

Tasmania: Adventures on an Island

by Ian Wallace (published by the author, 2006, RRP \$49.95, www.ianwallace.com.au).

Tasmania: Adventures on an Island is primarily a collection of photographs taken at five diverse locations in the Tasmanian bush. The



author also includes his journal of the walks—or in one instance a rafting trip—to these places. The photos carry the book and many are quite delightful, capturing the mood of the land. The book has a high-quality design and feel and in today's market represents good value for money.

In most instances, each chapter's images and text relate to a single journey to that location, restricting the atmosphere captured. (This contrasts with other books in which the photographer has either returned to capture the perfect scene or only selected images that reinforce his intended atmosphere.) This book feels a bit like someone showing you photos of a recent bushwalk and telling you about the experience.

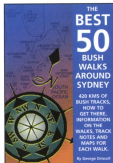
The book is plush; however, on a few occasions the pictures don't inspire and seem to have been taken in less than ideal light. A double-page spread of people rafting also doesn't seem to fit the tone of the book.

Peter Franklin

The Best 50 Bush Walks Around Sydney

by George Driscoll (published by the author, 2006, RRP \$24.95, [02] 9725 2933).

This is a small, attractive guidebook for day walks near Sydney. Each of the 50 walks is described over two pages with track notes on one side and a map on the facing page. Most of the walks described can be reached by public transport and are within two hours of Sydney. Lots of day walks in the Blue Mountains are included. The descriptions seem quite adequate and some useful footnotes are included that provide advice for novice bushwalkers, for



example how much water to carry. I particularly like the quirky nature of the walk titles: 'Bobbin Along' for a walk at Bobbin Head, and 'Sea to Summit' for a walk that climbs a peak in Royal National Park.

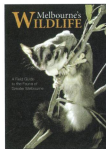
Dave Noble

Melbourne's Wildlife

by Museum Victoria (CSIRO Publishing, 2006, RRP \$39.95, www.publish.csiro.au).

Covering a large area around Melbourne, this fauna guide will appeal to a broad audience, from suburbanites to intrepid explorers of reserves and bushlands. The descriptions are sensibly ordered—divided into terrestrial and marine environments—and while concise, provide the reader with key features to identify that backyard critter. Every description is accompanied by excellent colour photographs. The chapter introductions give a good overview of the groups of fauna, often having useful simple, labelled anatomical drawings. It's not a complete guide to all fauna, but covers a large number of common animals. Its use is not limited to the Melbourne area.

Michele Kohout



Day Walks in Therabulat Country

by Michael Keats (Keats Holdings Pty Ltd, 2006, RRP \$31 including p&p, [02] 9144 2096).

It's easy to publish a book in these days of modern technology. Michael Keats has cobbled together a book which includes track notes for 19 walks he has led through Therabulat country (the Wild Dog Mountains). The walks are supported by information on the geology and ecology of the area.

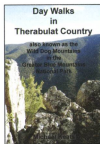
The walk descriptions include route details, necessary maps and desirable safety equipment, a comment regarding the degree of difficulty of the walk and a trip report. The book is amply illustrated and the maps, although small, provide clear identification of the routes taken.

Research appears to have been restricted to limited forays on the Internet and home library and anecdotes from a few mates. Accordingly, there are a number of errors and misinterpretations.

The book would have benefited from the touch of an experienced editor. A fine example of the pitfalls of self-publishing.

Roger Lembit

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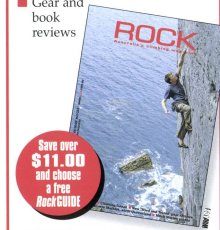
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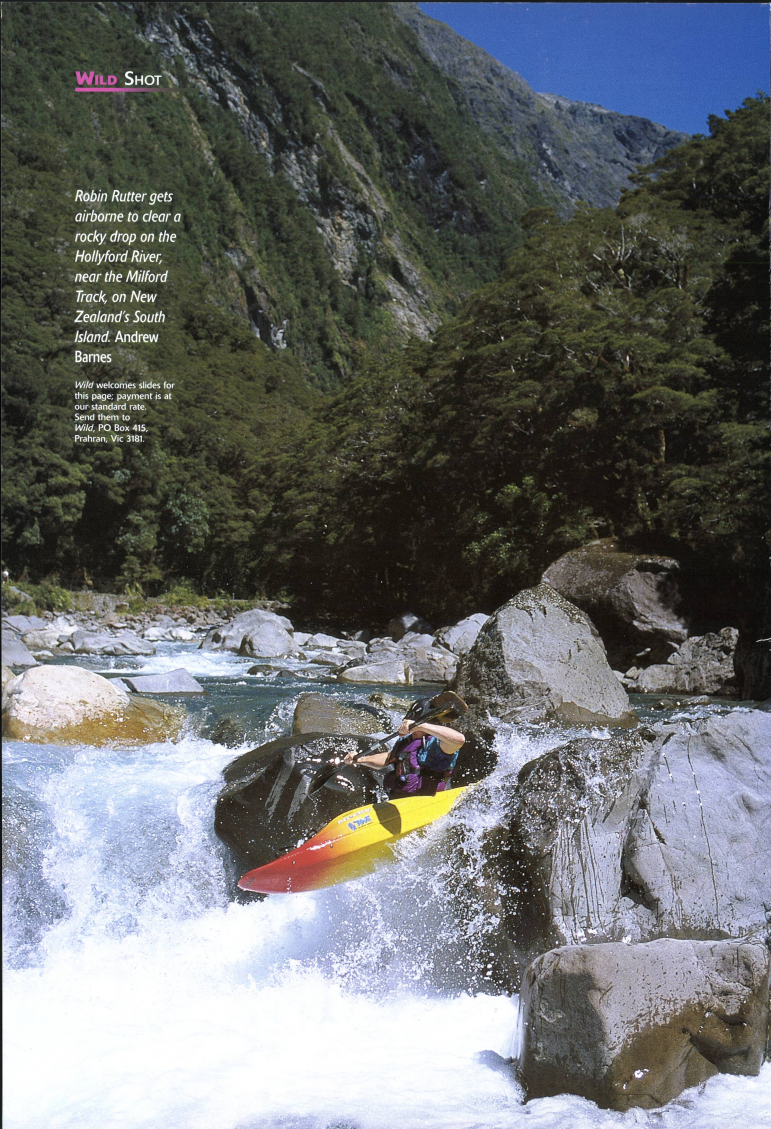
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WILD SHOT

Robin Rutter gets airborne to clear a rocky drop on the Hollyford River, near the Milford Track, on New Zealand's South Island. Andrew Barnes

Wild welcomes slides for this page; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



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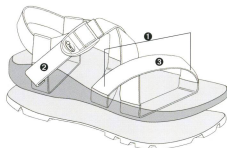


- ① Aggressive arch support controls pronation
 - ② Sculpted heel cup centres the foot's natural shock-absorbing pad under the heel bone
 - ③ Heel riser increases lateral stability
 - ④ Multiple widths ensure proper fit
- Gender-specific design accounts for subtle width, length and volume differences in men's and women's feet

* The APMA Seal of Acceptance is intended to raise consumer awareness by identifying products of exceptional quality that are manufactured with comfort, health, and safety in mind.

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Since 1989, all Chaco sport sandals have featured our anatomical pull-through strap system. This system provides complete adjustability to maximise fit, while eliminating the bulk and stiffness of overlapping Velcro®.



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All Chaco Sandals have been awarded the Seal of Acceptance by the APMA.

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